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Peer Review

NEA member Pat Stedman helps veteran teachers get better—or get out.

See page 4

NEA Today

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Teacher Versus Teacher?

President's Viewpoint

No way! Peer assistance and review is about teachers taking charge of their profession.

Bob Chase

For much of the past year, NEA's "new unionism"—our more aggressive commitment to quality and professionalism—remained mostly an aspiration, a goal, an unconfirmed rumor.

But when the issue of peer assistance and review came up at last summer's NEA Representative Assembly, suddenly the rubber met the road. You could smell the rubber.

In my three decades as an NEA activist, I have encountered few issues that stir up such passions. And all those passions spilled out during the debate at the RA.

Proponents argued that peer assistance and review is about coming to the aid of struggling teachers and saving their jobs.

Opponents warned that it would pit teacher against teacher, and jeopardize the solidarity of our local Associations.

Dennis Testa, then-president of the New Jersey Education Association, spoke powerfully for the opposition: "I don't want [members] to fear coming to this organization, to fear coming to me, to fear coming to local leaders. I want to be their protector."

This view was echoed by Greg Bonaccorsi of California: "Peer review is going to interfere with the trust that's built between colleagues. Our profession is one that builds relationships, and doesn't destroy them."

Linda Bacon of Florida countered with a series of pointed questions: "How many of us can say we don't have colleagues who are struggling? How many times have we asked ourselves, 'How can we ignore the impact that teacher is having on the lives of students?' Who is better qualified to offer assistance, and more likely to be listened to than another teacher?"

The debate ran for nearly two hours, with a score of speakers. And in the end, the 9,300 delegates voted overwhelmingly to reverse NEA's long-standing opposition to peer review.

In my opinion, two arguments carried the day for peer assistance and review.

First, NEA members have had enough of superficial, drive-by evaluations conducted by out-of-touch administrators. Said Lea Schelke of Michigan: "Teacher evaluation is a fact of life. But we can do it better."

Or, as Holly Olson of California put it: "We want the same tools to save a teacher that the administrator has to fire one. I want us to be an equal partner in a discussion of whether a teacher will be terminated, not one who has little control over the final outcome."

Second, advocates made a compelling case that peer assistance and review is about teacher empowerment.

"We are the teachers of America, and we must take control of this profession," said Gary Blumenstein of Virginia. "If we continue to leave it up to legislators, politicians, church leaders, and others, we are going to regret it. Now is the time to take a stand."

No one underestimates the challenge of replicating the peer assistance and review concept beyond the handful of districts now using it. Indeed, this is why the new NEA policy on peer review adopted at the RA leaves the choice of creating such a program strictly to the discretion of local affiliates.

But the reality is that, where proper safeguards are in place, the peer-intervention process works.

And peer review enjoys broad support among educators in districts where it is being used. After seven years of peer assistance and review in Columbus, Ohio, polls showed that 90 percent of local teachers supported it.

Only you can decide whether peer assistance and review would be a good fit for your local affiliate. I urge you to read this month's *NEA Today* cover story on peer review, as well as the Rights Watch column and the Debate page, both of which also focus on the ins and outs, the pros and cons, of peer review programs.

I think that all of these articles can help inform a healthy discussion in your school and district.

My own view is that peer assistance and review can be a powerful vehicle for reaching out to colleagues who need help, rather than leaving them to the tender mercies of their school districts.

Peer assistance and review, in short, can make a real, tangible difference in the quality of our public schools.

Can We Talk?

Traditionally, these "President's Viewpoint" columns have been pretty much a monologue. From now on, I want them to be a dialogue—a lively conversation between you and me on matters of importance to our profession.

Next month's *NEA Today* will spotlight new research on the best way to teach reading—phonics, whole language, or both? Write me a brief letter or send an E-mail message to BobChase@nea.org with your opinions and insights. I can't respond to every note. But I plan to capture—and comment on—a good sample of your voices and viewpoints. Thanks.

NEA at a Glance

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Did You Know...
That NEA membership is now well over 2.3 million—2,323,336 to be exact. Here's the rough breakdown: 2.05 million K-12 members, 80,000 higher ed members, 140,000 retired members, and 45,000 student members. NEA state affiliates with more than 100,000 members: California, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

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NEA Today this Month

A Quality Team

Early this month, NEA President Bob Chase and American Federation of Teachers President Sandra Feldman are scheduled to announce a new joint council that will coordinate the two organizations' efforts on behalf of better schools. The first three challenges the council will address: teacher quality, discipline, and school infrastructure. Meanwhile, merger talks between NEA and AFT are continuing. Look for details in future issues of *NEA Today*. For more information on the new joint council, go to NEA's Web site (www. nea.org).

Cover Story

4 Peer Review
Will Columbus, Ohio, teacher Dennis Grossman make the grade? Peer reviewer Pat Stedman (right) spent a year, visiting his classroom, offering assistance, and evaluating his performance. Find out what she recommended on page 4. For more on NEA policy on peer review, see page 2. For legal advice, go to page 25, and for a feisty member debate on the topic, skip to page 43. To add your opinion to the mix, go to *NEA Today* Online at www.nea.org/neatoday.

Chris Kassen

Cover photo by Chris Kasson

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You Be the .

Teachers in peer review programs are helping decide whether their colleagues make the grade. Here's how—and why.

Dennis Grossman's job was on the line. After 28 years of classroom experience, the Columbus, Ohio, third grade teacher was told his performance was unsatisfactory.

Carolyn Rogers, the principal at North Linden Elementary, complained that Grossman's room was in total disarray. She said it was difficult to walk from one wall to the next without tripping over games, toys, or kids' science and art projects.

Grossman's lesson plans, lunch counts, and student grades, the principal added, were consistently late—if they were turned in at all.

Rogers told Grossman this situation could not be allowed to continue.

Stunned, Grossman did what any NEA member in similar circumstances would do—he called his local NEA affiliate, the Columbus Education Association, for help.

If he'd lived most anywhere else in the country, Grossman's union would have defended his job and his right to due process. And stopped there.

But the Columbus Education Association most definitely does not stop there. This 4,800 member NEA affiliate tries to ensure every classroom a quality teacher by jointly running a program that helps beginning teachers and shaky veterans get better—or get out.

The Columbus Peer Assistance and Review Program, a collaborative effort between the Columbus Education Association and local school officials, has garnered national attention—from network TV news to the front page of the *New York Times*.

Meanwhile, this past summer, peer review was the hottest topic at NEA's annual Representative Assembly. After long debate, the 9,300 delegates voted to drop NEA's historic opposition to peer review and give the green light to any local affiliate that wants to pursue it.

Since then, more than 1,000 calls about peer review have poured into the CEA office from local unions.

Still, many NEA affiliates remain adamantly opposed to the idea of teachers evaluating other teachers. They say the union's job is to protect teachers, not to help get rid of them.

CEA President John Grossman (no relation to Dennis) disagrees: "I don't see the union role as protecting every teacher, no matter how bad they are.

"I see the union role as guaranteeing that people don't lose their jobs without due process," he says. "This way some people do lose their jobs. But it's fair. And I really believe it can transform the profession."

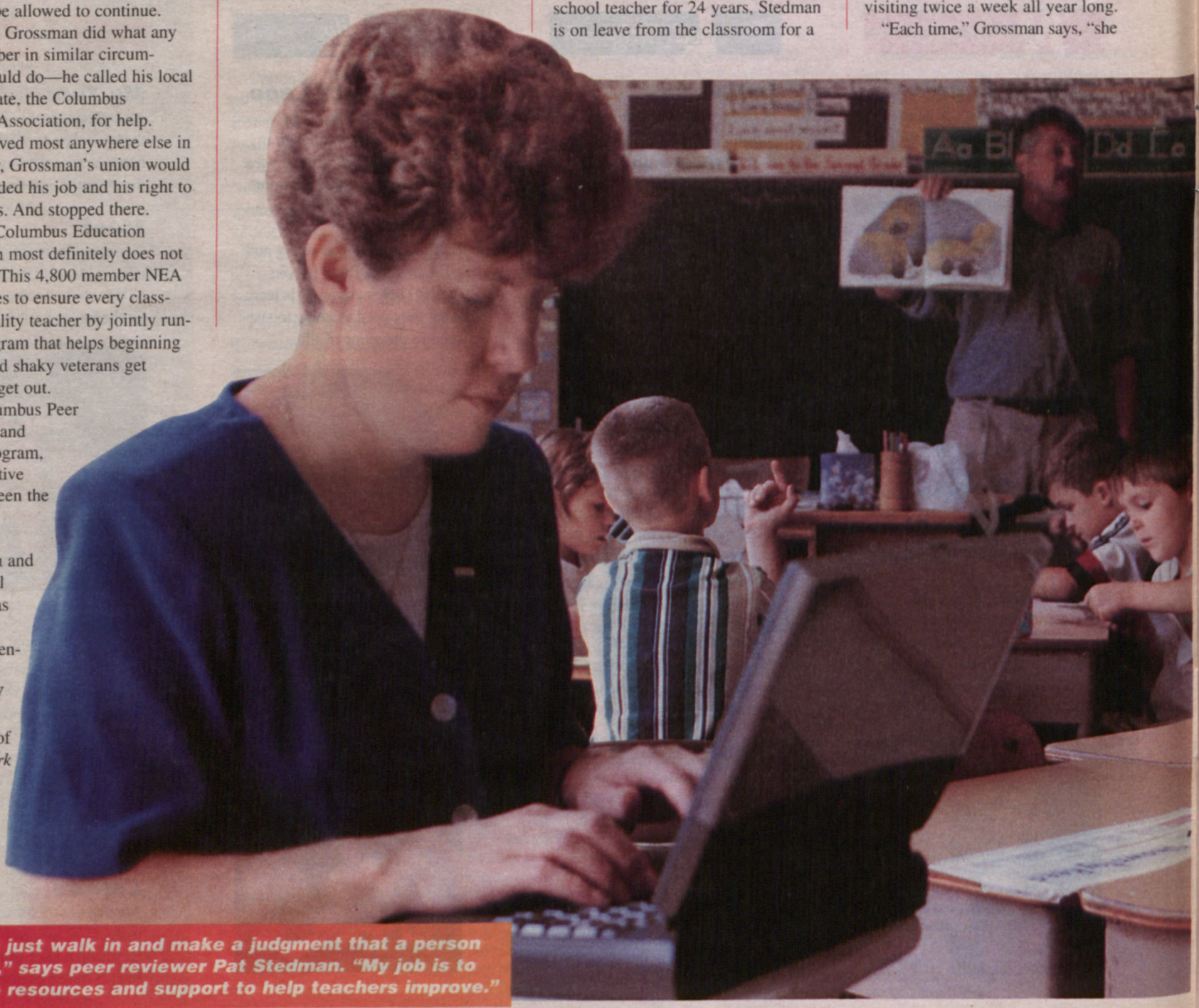
Pat Stedman agrees. A middle school teacher for 24 years, Stedman is on leave from the classroom for a three-year assignment as a peer reviewer.

Last year, Stedman was assigned to Dennis Grossman's room. Her first impression: "It really was a mess! It was an accumulation of 28 years of teaching. There were just piles of what some people might call trash."

Grossman concedes that he has "problems with holding onto stuff and not throwing anything away. But it's not like I'm a character out of *Men Behaving Badly*," he says. "I didn't think it was something I should lose my job for."

Stedman quickly outlined plans to help Grossman with classroom management and organization. And she became a fixture in his classroom, visiting twice a week all year long.

"Each time," Grossman says, "she



"I don't just walk in and make a judgment that a person is unfit," says peer reviewer Pat Stedman. "My job is to provide resources and support to help teachers improve."

Judge

would write down what she observed about my behavior and the kids' behavior. Her notes told me where I should be putting more attention."

Though nervous at first, Grossman eventually welcomed Stedman's visits. "She's a good sounding board," he says. "I get immediate, consistent feedback on what I'm doing wrong."

One example: Stedman noticed some students wandering the room, off-task, while Grossman put math examples on the board.

"I told him some of the kids were spending too much time at the pencil sharpener fooling around," says Stedman. "I suggested he have them sharpen two pencils in the morning, and have students who break pencils come to him for new ones."

Stedman brought in articles and books on classroom management for Grossman to review. She suggested he visit other colleagues to see how smoothly their rooms functioned.

Chris Kasson

Stedman was supportive with Grossman, but often blunt—especially when it came to the issue of clutter. She says students were taking their cues from him, leaving their work areas messy, too.

Grossman soon began making return trips to school after dinner, to clean and organize his room.

"The custodian looked forward to my company," Grossman jokes. "I would stay until 11 some evenings, grading papers, cleaning animal cages, and trying to put things away."

As the school year progressed, Stedman continued to hear complaints that Grossman wasn't handing in lesson plans on time.

"Writing lesson plans wasn't a big goal to me, though I knew it should be," Grossman says. "I preferred to spend my time with the students and parents."

Stedman says many of Grossman's problems have to do with setting priorities.

"He scores very high on the kid-meter," she says. "When others are straightening their records and organizing their rooms, he's doing science projects with the kids."

Still, she instructed him to get those plans ready. Grossman began printing his lesson plans on blue paper so he could find them.

In time, Grossman felt encouraged. "It got to the point where I could see my desk was actually made of wood. It wasn't all clutter."

By the end of the school year, Stedman had to make a recommendation to a panel—three teachers, two district administrators, and CEA's president—on whether Grossman should be retained or released.

Stedman struggled long and hard. In the end, she suggested the panel allow Grossman to continue teaching—but remain in the peer review program for additional guidance.

"When someone has taught for 28 years, the tendency is to think they're stale, or they don't care anymore," says Stedman. "But Dennis was just the opposite. He took professional development courses and showed a great deal of care and understanding toward students. Besides, I don't think anyone should be fired because they're not neat and tidy."

Stedman was also impressed by Grossman's creativity. "Dennis is a spur-of-the-moment person. He uses the teachable moment. There was cooperative learning going on, and the kids were enjoying his class."

This past September, Grossman began his 29th year of teaching.

Pat Stedman continues to visit him. This year's goal: to work on a system to track students' work.

Says Stedman: "This is probably the deciding year for Dennis. I'll show him how a system will help him and the kids. But, in the end, I can't force him to be organized. I can only tell him the repercussions if he isn't."

—Karen Gutloff

Chris Kasson

Columbus Education Association President John Grossman

The Nuts & Bolts

The Columbus Peer Assistance and Review Program—one of only a few of its kind in the nation—has thrust the Columbus Education Association into the national spotlight.

John Grossman, CEA president and architect of the program, hopes the attention will make a difference in teacher quality and student achievement nationally—and help redefine the local union's role.

"Our union is taking complete responsibility for professional development," he says.

Here's how the peer review program works for the 4,800 teachers and 65,000 students in Columbus:

- All new teachers—even those who have experience teaching elsewhere—are assigned a "consulting" or mentor teacher.
- Veteran teachers can enter the program in three ways: They can be recommended by a teacher in the building, they can be recommended by an administrator, or they can volunteer for self-placement.

The decision for placement must be approved by the school's Association Building Council, composed of teachers, the principal, and a union representative.

- Teacher evaluators make at least 20 visits to the classroom and conduct one-on-one conferences for goal setting. They conduct professional development seminars for new teachers.
- All new teachers receive interim status reports from their assigned mentors.
- Peer reviewers are experienced teachers released from the classroom. They serve a term of three years, then rotate back into the classroom. Peer reviewers receive an additional stipend worth 20 percent of the base salary.
- At the end of the school year, peer reviewers go before a panel to recommend whether new teachers should be "renewed" to continue teaching or "non-renewed."
- Veterans placed in the program may be "positively released"—meaning they return to the classroom without further review—or "negatively released," meaning they leave the school system.
- The final decision rests with the seven-member panel. Four of the panel members are appointed by CEA. The other three are appointed by the superintendent.
- During the 1996-97 school year, 221 new teachers were evaluated by PAR consultants. Twenty left the district voluntarily or were non-renewed.

Says Grossman: "Nationally, about half of all teachers quit in their first five years. But we're retaining 85 percent, and we're getting rid of the bad ones faster."

- About 20 percent of the experienced teachers who go through the program leave the school system.

For More Information

There's a lot more to say on the topic of peer assistance and review—and more to read in this issue of *NE A Today*.

- **Debate:** "Should NEA local affiliates help get rid of bad teachers?" An NEA member from Columbus says "yes." An NEA member in Illinois lists a half-dozen reasons to say "no." See page 43.
- **Rights Watch:** NEA's Office of the General Counsel offers a look at the legal issues surrounding peer review. See page 25.
- **President's Viewpoint:** And NEA President Bob Chase discusses Association members' reactions to peer review and "new unionism." See page 2.
- **On the Web:** The discussion on peer review doesn't end on these *NEA Today* pages. You can visit *NEA Today* Online at www.nea.org/neatoday to vote on the Debate question, discuss peer review with other NEA members, and learn more about an upcoming, live online chat on the subject.

Who Do You Think You Are?

An NEA member who evaluates her peers answers the tough questions.

By the end of this school year, 5 to 7 percent of the 400 new teachers hired in Columbus, Ohio, won't be back. They'll get a "non-renewal," based on the recommendation of a teacher who has spent more than 30 hours observing their work in the classroom.

For some, that's too much power and influence for teachers to wield. Aleta Cantrell, a 20-year special education teacher in Columbus and a peer reviewer, explains why she feels qualified to evaluate her peers.

What makes you qualified to judge the effectiveness of another teacher?
I make at least 20 observations of a teacher's performance in the classroom, and I sit down with them for at least 10 one-on-one conferences to discuss areas they need to work on. Seeing them so many times gives me the right to say that I can honestly evaluate that person.

Why not leave the evaluating up to the principal?
I can spend more time with a teacher than principals will ever have a chance to. They have too many other obligations. Besides, this is also an assistance program. My job is to be a support system. I always give teachers advice and resources to help them do a better job.

Chris Kasson

Special ed teacher Aleta Cantrell serves as a peer reviewer in Columbus.

How can a teacher be sure you'll be fair and objective?
It's never personal. I go to the farthest degree to be fair. I read and re-read my notes before giving them to the person being evaluated to make sure I'm on target. Then I give them time to call me and discuss my comments. I want to make sure we're seeing things eye-to-eye. I don't ever want to get to a place where there's no dialogue.

Aren't you making yourself the arbiter of what's "good" or "bad" teaching?
It's not my personal opinion. I base my decisions on teaching performance terms that define effective teaching. These terms are research-based and very clear. Effective teachers are nurturing, well-planned, and have good classroom management skills. By the same token, ineffective teachers aren't nurturing and have no goals for themselves or their students. They're not reflective and show no desire to improve.

Any regrets after you decide someone should be non-renewed?
I wouldn't say regrets, but I've spent many nights crying over some of these decisions. I always wonder, "Was there anything else I could have done to help this person become more effective?"

Why put yourself in such a tough spot?
It's difficult at times, but I've gotten so much out of it. I'll be an even better teacher when I go back to the classroom, because I've learned so much by observing. It's also very gratifying when you see somebody struggling, then they follow through on your suggestions and become successful teachers. It's a professional opportunity I wouldn't want to miss.

Resources

- To learn more about peer assistance and review in Columbus, Ohio, visit the Columbus Education Association Web site at www.ceaohio.org. To receive the CEA Peer Assistance and Review program manual or to find out more about an upcoming conference on peer review, call 614/253-4731.
- *If Teachers Fail. . .Fix or Fire?* This episode of *School Stories*, produced by NEA and The Learning Channel, tells the story of peer assistance and review in Columbus. $16.95. Stock #7615-X-10-F. Call 800/229-4200.
- *Mentor Teacher Programs.* NEA Professional Library. An overview of what teacher mentoring is, how it works, and how it can work for you. $4.50. Call 800/229-4200.
- *Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers.* NEA Professional Library. Tips on classroom management, teaching techniques, and strategies for communicating with parents. $4.50. Call 800/229-4200.
- "The Evolution of Peer Coaching," *Education Leadership*, March, 1996. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. For a copy, call 703/549-9110.
- The ASCD Web site—www.ascd.org—has a number of abstracts and papers available on peer review. Select "search by topic" and type in "peer evaluation."

The Bottom Line on Peer Review

Can peer review improve the quality of education? That depends on whom you ask.

"Peer assistance and review ultimately raises the quality of teachers by creating teachers better prepared to function in the classroom. It sends a message to the community that we're striving for quality education for children."

—Sandra Stroot, associate professor, teacher education, Ohio State University

"I think peer review won't help teachers. I think it will shake their confidence and self-assurance. If they know a peer is watching and it might count against them, they'll walk on egg shells. Instead of being comfortable, the teacher will be hesitant to share knowledge—and kids pick up on that."

—Mark Cebulski, president, Cedarburg Education Association, Wisconsin

"There can be a positive impact on education when you have teachers assisting colleagues and providing resources. But a peer evaluation program doesn't do that. The whole idea of evaluating peers goes against the main purpose, which should be to provide support."

—Barbara James, president, New Brunswick Education Association, New Jersey

"We can't afford to have people who are marginal or won't be good with kids. The peer reviewer can spend 30 minutes visiting teachers and writing goals. I don't often have time to do that. In Columbus, the peer review program has done a good job of non-renewing teachers who don't belong in the classroom."

—Gary Rader, principal, Highland Elementary School, Columbus, Ohio

"As a peer evaluator, I had a first-year kindergarten teacher who really worried that her kids weren't retaining information. I observed her classroom and noted there were too many ideas thrown at the kids at one time. She had no transition or closure between activities. I worked with her on pacing and transition. I came back a week later and she said, "It worked!" I'd say peer review is definitely helping to improve the quality of education her kids are getting."

—Margaret Stumpf, elementary teacher, peer reviewer, Columbus, Ohio

"The more we help teachers become confident in their skills, the better job they do in the classroom, and students profit from that. When parents realize teachers are getting this kind of help, they feel greater confidence in the school system."

—Robert Teeter, member, Board of Education, Columbus, Ohio

On the Cutting Edge

The KEYS to Better Schools

In Memphis, 14 city schools use an NEA checklist to spot weaknesses and improve learning.

You wouldn't ask your doctor to prescribe medication without first diagnosing the problem. And yet, too often, people ask you to make wholesale changes in your school without taking the time to figure out exactly what needs fixing.

To help in that critical diagnostic phase of school improvement, NEA researchers have developed a tool—Keys for Excellence for Your Schools—that's making a big difference in schools around the country.

Schools like Cummings Elementary. A Title I school where 96 percent of the students qualify for free lunch, Cummings is one of 14 Memphis city schools that are successfully using KEYS to identify weaknesses and build action plans to correct them.

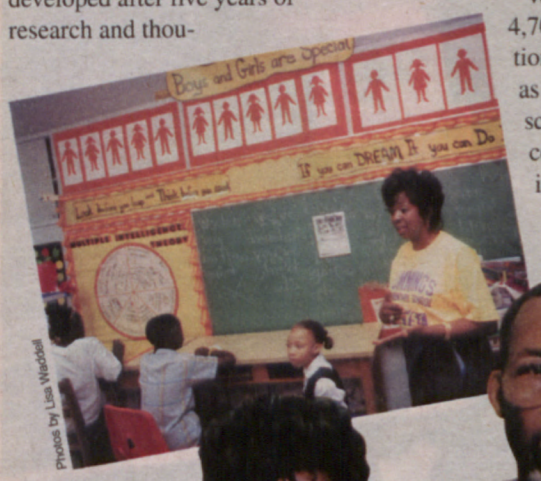
KEYS is, essentially, a checklist developed after five years of research and thousands of interviews about what makes a quality public school.

The final product: a list of the 35 characteristics NEA researchers consistently found in schools with strong student achievement.

The Memphis district opened its doors to KEYS in 1995 when Superintendent N. Gerri House required each of the city's 161 school sites to adopt an improvement plan that incorporates "student results."

With House's blessing, the 4,700-member Memphis Education Association offered KEYS as an improvement plan for any school where at least 85 percent of the faculty voted to try it.

At Cummings Elementary, teachers, support staff, parents, and even community partners completed a KEYS survey, which was scored by NEA researchers.



Photos by Lisa Waddell

NEA activist Frankie Morris, left and inset, and principal Robert Terrell share the KEYS to their school's success.

Cummings got "passing" grades on 27 indicators, but scored low on factors like: teacher/parent collaboration to remove barriers to learning, assessments that take into account student background, and staff development in decision making, problem solving, leadership, and communications.

In a nutshell, "We had excellent teachers who were isolated," says instructional facilitator Frankie Morris, Cummings's KEYS coordinator.

A school KEYS team—Morris, the principal, and four other staffers—now receives ongoing help from NEA and the Memphis Education Association. Team members pass that help and training on to colleagues at lively in-school meetings.

The results are stunning.

In Cummings's second year as a KEYS school, parent volunteers are reading to kids and listening to them read back. Students' scores on a statewide reading test have improved. And school employees are talking and collaborating with one another—and with parents—like never before.

Cummings staffers—like those in other Memphis KEYS schools—are taking more initiative, applying for grants, and taking charge at meetings.

And they're transferring that initiative to their students, who are keeping daily journals and entering every academic contest imaginable.

"On the whole, our children are taking more books home and reading and writing more," beams Morris.

Not surprisingly, NEA membership is quite high in the KEYS schools.

Explains Memphis local President Tom Marchand: "We're going in a new direction and changing the role of this Association. We not only negotiate the union contract, but we help with school improvement issues, too."

Some Keys to Quality

- For more information about KEYS, fax 202/822-7482 or point your Web browser to www.nea.org/resources/keys.html.
- KEYS is now ready for use in 23 states—AK, AZ, CA, CO, DE, NH, FL, IA, ID, IL, KY, MD, ME, MN, MT, MS, NC, ND, OH, TN, TX, WA, and VA. For information, contact your NEA state affiliate.
- NEA is now setting up local and national networks of KEYS schools and working with the University of Maryland to establish a six-credit graduate certification program for local KEYS coordinators.
- NEA is about to engage in a broad national survey—including teachers, educational support staff, and parents—to clarify its KEYS indicators.

Heroes & Zeroes

To eight-year-old Kayla Haugen, there is no greater hero than Mike Hanson, a custodian and NEA member in Manden, North Dakota. Early this fall, Hanson performed the Heimlich maneuver, dislodged a piece of chicken, and saved Kayla's life. Says the modest volunteer firefighter: "We're all here to help when we can."

When do principals become ad reps? When Channel One, that bottom-feeding commercial carrier, asks them to. Last year, Channel One offered advertisers the chance to give out coupons to its captive student audience. Some 60 percent of Channel One schools participated, with principals handing them out. Are a few TVs worth it?

Tired of hearing anti-public school, anti-NEA rhetoric from the pulpit? Take heart from Judy Briganti's example. Vice-president of NEA's Indiana affiliate, Briganti approached her pastor in Elkhart for help. The result: a recognition and prayer service for area public school teachers and a commitment to support the community's schools. Hallelujah!

Pennies from purgatory to Mike Podgrusky, an economist at the University of Missouri, who says the private sector can—and should—squeeze profits from public schools. One suggestion: hire young, non-certified teachers at low salaries. "In private schools," he notes, "teachers don't stay around long, and that keeps costs down."

High-tops and high-fives to NBA center Chris Dudley, who runs a co-ed basketball camp for youngsters with diabetes in Vernonia, Oregon. A diabetic himself, Dudley tells kids that, "If you deal with your disease, it's not going to stop you from doing anything."

On Capitol Hill

An Interesting Dilemma

Even though legislation has just been passed to balance the federal budget by 2002, the Congressional Budget Office and the Office of Management and Budget are predicting an economy-driven surplus—at least $32 billion in 2002 alone. Over five years, the cumulative deficit will be at least $188 billion less than that projected in July. *What you can do: Urge your members of Congress to spend some of that surplus on education.*

Pensioners in Poverty

Public employees in 14 states do not pay into Social Security, although they can receive a Social Security spousal benefit if married to someone covered by the federal plan. The catch: an "offset" that reduces the Social Security check by two-thirds of the value of the public pension. NEA supports H.R. 2273, which would allow Social Security recipients to receive a minimum of $1,200 per month in combined Social Security and public pension benefits before an offset kicks in. *What you can do: Urge your Representative to support H.R. 2273.*

Health Care for *All* Kids!

The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 provides $24 billion for health care for 5 million uninsured children. But state participation in the expanded health program is voluntary. That's why NEA members need to identify children without coverage and put the money to use. *What you can do: Contact your governor's office to determine which state agency has responsibility for implementing this program. Then work with other child advocates to ensure that the program provides necessary services.*

Put Joe Camel to Pasture

President Clinton has listed provisions that must be at the heart of any anti-tobacco legislation, including a plan to reduce youth smoking—and tough penalties for tobacco companies if targets aren't met. NEA is monitoring this process. *What you can do: Stay tuned.*

In Worse Shape than Jails

The repair bill is past due for America's public schools. Can you count on federal help to pay it?

Electrician Bob Lepak sure hopes so. He and 10 other school maintenance staffers in Cheltenham, a Philadelphia suburb, are struggling to keep eight aging buildings humming and healthy.

It's an uphill battle. Cheltenham's supply and maintenance budget is down $10,000 this year, only the latest cutback in a school district reeling from lower property tax revenues.

These cutbacks have left local schools with leaky boilers, an outdated electrical network, and an inefficient heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system.

For Bob Lepak, safety is also a top concern. During his rounds, the electrician finds "circuit breaker panels that are rated at 15 amps, but are pulling 60 to 70 amps through the wires and won't trip. This is a fire hazard."

Adequate maintenance, says this NEA local leader, is essential to quality education.

"That means," he explains, "clean schools free of contaminated air, asbestos, and electrical hazards."

Infrastructure problems like those in Cheltenham "cut across urban, suburban, and rural schools," points out NEA's chief lobbyist in the nation's capital, Dale Lestina.

"The federal government needs to pick up its share of the burden," says Lestina.

Fortunately, he notes, there is "budding bipartisan support" in Congress for rebuilding, renovating, and rewiring America's schools.

But that support won't bloom, Lestina stresses, unless you let *your* members of Congress know about your school's problems and needs—everything from leaky roofs and boilers to insufficient phone lines, wiring, and electrical outlets.

Need arguments to bolster the case for stronger federal support? Try these:

■ **Many states can't meet school construction needs on their own.**

According to NEA researcher Michael Kahn, current estimates to rebuild America's schools run as high as $300 billion. That price tag includes estimates of up to $100 billion to bring the information highway to all schools.

"The longer the rebuilding is delayed, the more it will cost," Kahn says.

What states are spending for infrastructure, says the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), varies widely, from $6 per student annually in Montana to $2,254 per student in Alaska. Within states, disparities can sometimes be equally dramatic between different districts.

State governments, the GAO adds, "face pressure from other rapidly rising budget expenditures—such as health care—that compete for the same limited funds."

■ **21st century schools will have 21st century needs.**

The GAO points out that new teaching methods and assessment techniques call for new kinds of school buildings. Schools will need to be equipped with everything from adequate space—for small- and large-group instruction—to wiring and air conditioning for networked technology. None of this, of course, comes free.

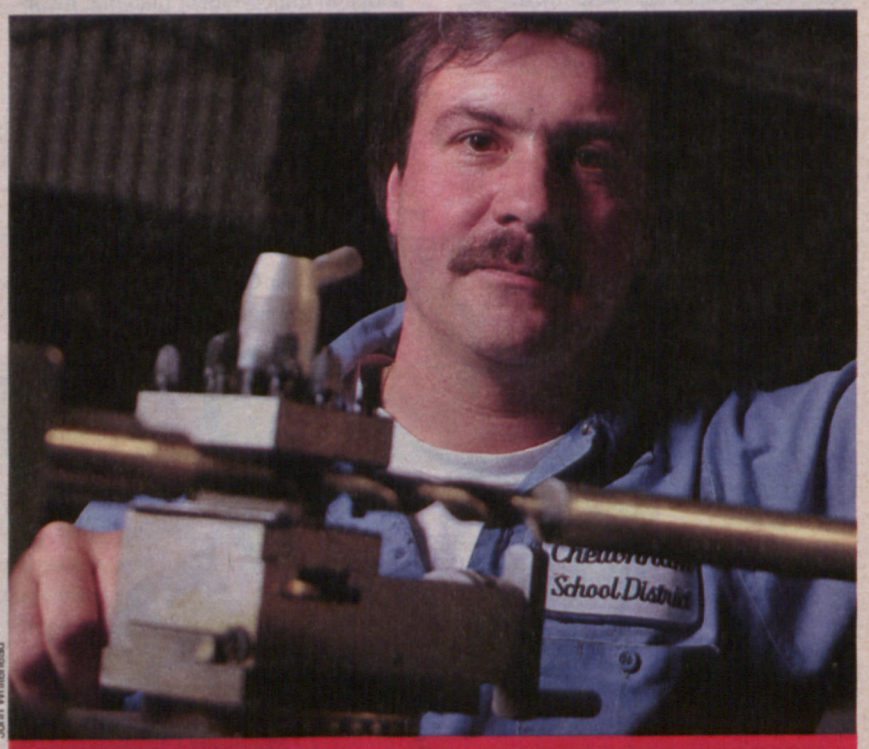
■ **It's time to get this nation's priorities straight.** The GAO estimates that some 60 percent of America's 80,000 K-12 schools need "extensive repair, overhaul, or replacement of at least one major building feature"—like a roof.

Notes Congressman Dale Kildee (D-Michigan): "A federal judge has said there are some prisons in my district he can't put inmates in, because they're in such bad shape.

"Yet," adds Kildee, "I have schools in worse shape than those prisons—and they're still in use. What does that say to kids about the value of education?"

For More Information

To read more from the GAO, go to www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces160.shtml and search for reports on "School Infrastructure."



John Whitehead

Pennsylvania school electrician Bob Lepak fights an uphill battle. His district has cut its maintenance budget—again.

The Bottom Line

Better science: The best way to improve science education? Over a quarter of science teachers say that reducing class size would be the best step. Their next choice: increasing dollars for classroom resources.

Principal pay: High school principals averaged $72,410 last year, about $10,000 more than their elementary counterparts. Superintendents now average $98,106. Administrators in the mid-Atlantic are the nation's best-paid, the Rocky Mountain states the lowest.

Starting salaries: The gap between the starting salaries of education majors and the salaries of other college graduates is growing again. In 1995, education grads averaged $19,450 their first year, about $12,000 less than computer majors.

Distance learning: The numbers of college-level courses available via videocassette, taped cablecast, and the Internet continue to soar, but less than half the colleges with distance learning programs regularly compensate the instructors who develop these courses.

On Your Side

Cleaning Up Sick Buildings

Sam Gutman is fighting for cleaner indoor air in schools. This is one issue she *really* knows . . .

Craig Line

Vermont teacher Sam Gutman recommends proper upkeep of school ventilation systems—from filters to ducts.

The title of Barbara "Sam" Gutman's master's thesis says it all: "Sick Building Syndrome and Its Effect on Vermont Schools."

All, that is, except the syndrome's effect on Sam Gutman, a middle school art teacher who's been diagnosed with fibromyalga, a muscular disease.

Because of her illness, Gutman's so sensitive to some chemicals that diesel fumes wafting through a school bus window on a field trip can knock her flat—for up to two days.

Gutman's case is severe, but millions of other school employees and students have experienced distress as a result of indoor air pollution.

In 1995, the U.S. General Accounting Office released a survey indicating that *half* of all American schools have problems that affect indoor air quality—including tightly sealed buildings, poor ventilation, synthetic building materials, and delayed maintenance.

Across the country, NEA activists have met that news head-on, with school-based research, information campaigns, and organized protests to school boards and state legislators.

Gutman, who works at Colchester Middle School, serves as Vermont-NEA's volunteer representative to a statewide Indoor Air Quality Committee—which also includes delegates from state agencies, school boards, the state employee union, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Vermont Children's Forum.

Formed in 1995, the group is analyzing indoor air quality standards, programs and procedures in other states, and guidelines issued by the engineering profession. By early winter, the panel will deliver a report with recommendations to the state legislature.

The committee is also determining the extent of the "sick building" problem, a task made easier by Vermont-NEA's recent survey of its 8,600 members—now being tabulated.

Anecdotal evidence abounds. Many school employees across Vermont have told Gutman they finished the last school year "feeling the effects of sick building syndrome, having dealt with repeated illness, fatigue, and a variety of other symptoms."

Employee reporting of such symptoms—which can include everything from respiratory problems to short-term memory loss—is making some school administrators nervous.

"Some superintendents haven't allowed employees to fill out the NEA survey at school," Gutman says. Worse, she has received reports of districts intimidating or firing teachers for complaining about air quality.

But educators needn't suffer in silence. Even when legislation isn't in place, Gutman says, you should:

- Read as much as you can about the issue of indoor air quality.
- Record colleagues' complaints about health problems. Keep track of staff and student absenteeism to spot patterns—like higher absences in winter, when buildings are sealed tight.
- Ensure that your school's ventilation system filters are changed at least four times a year, and that classrooms are tested for radon.
- Avoid wearing fragrances in school.
- Be wary of new carpeting and cubicle wall fabric that could contain formaldehyde. Be wary of pets in the classroom that can trigger allergic reactions and harbor fleas, mites, and lice.
- Request that the school district post pesticide and chemical use signs before spraying.
- Meet with parent groups to let them know of your fears and frustrations. Educate them on indoor air quality by inviting experts from the EPA or your state health department.
- Stick together with co-workers and work through your NEA local and state affiliates to clean up your school.

For More Information

Contact Sam Gutman via E-mail at Bgutman@Juno.com or call NEA's Health Information Network at 800/718-8387 (www.nea.org/hin).

For additional help, order the EPA/NEA Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Action Kit *($22, 202/512-1800) and NEA's* Healthy School Handbook *($21.95, stock #1863-X-10-F, 800/229-4200).*

Spray Ticks, Not Tots

The Pennsylvania State Education Association supports a bill requiring notification to parents 72 hours before pesticides are applied in schools—as well as prior posting on grounds and district "integrated pest management plans." In testimony, PSEA Treasurer Sue Houghton noted that the EPA has found that "exposure to toxic substances in pesticides can affect fetal, infant, and childhood growth."

Back Pay on the Way

An arbitrator has ruled that the Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) violated a department directive by not offering permanent employment to nearly 200 temporary teachers who served as DoDDS employees between the 1991-92 and 1996-97 school years and met requirements for permanent status.

The arbitrator has ordered pay and benefits, with interest, back to the time the affected Federal Education Association members should have been converted to permanent status. Moreover, DoDDS must offer to reinstate any temporary employees from the same period who have left the system as a result of improperly being denied permanent employment.

87 Years *Mean* Something

They were told not to discuss their layoff notices with anybody, but five seasoned teachers—with a combined 87 years of seniority—took their case to the Bloomfield (Nebraska) Education Association. UniServ Director Trish Guinan prepared each teacher for RIF hearings and rallied staff and the community behind them. The hearings were never held, and the five teachers returned to work this school year.

A Sudden Change of Plans

By phone and mail, NEA members in Tuscaloosa City, Alabama, have successfully lobbied school board members to kill a plan to contract out custodial services—saving the jobs of six night custodians.

Small schools: According to a new U.S. Education Department survey, the average charter school enrolls just 275 students, with 60 percent of the charter schools studied below 200. The percent of traditional public schools with fewer than 200 students: 16.

Course ratings: Middle and high school students, by a narrow margin, consider social studies their most "boring" subject, says a new Bayer Corporation survey. The most difficult subject? Just over one-third of students say math.

Preparing teachers: A task force of the NEA-backed National Association for the Accreditation of Teacher Education says that teacher prep programs are doing a poor job training teachers to integrate technology across the curriculum.

School computing: Hand-me-down computers can now be found in 16 percent of the nation's schools. About 30 percent of schools have computers thanks to corporate donations. Federal funds pay for computers in about 40 percent of schools.

In the States

Good News from California
Educators will benefit from what the California Teachers Association calls the "best state budget in many years." The spending plan includes some $1.5 billion for the state's K-3 class size reduction effort, raises per-pupil funding for operational costs, and funds high school technology grants. The budget also includes $56 million for training in teaching elementary reading and $50 million for staff development.

Don't Mess with Texas
Despite a $2 million pro-voucher public relations campaign, all voucher legislation in the last session of the Texas state legislature died in committee. The reason: intense lobbying by members of the Texas State Teachers Association and other affiliates of the statewide Coalition for Public Schools.

Iowans Analyze Blueprint
A report from the Iowa Governor's Commission for Educational Excellence for the 21st Century calls for everything from financial aid to districts to extend the school year to a one-year internship to ease new teachers into the profession. The Iowa State Education Association is now analyzing the report with the help of 400 teacher members and 100 local affiliate presidents.

Read to Your Kids!
In collaboration with the Seven-Up Company and Radio Disney, the Utah Education Association is sponsoring a program that encourages parents to read to their children. Ten UEA locals along the Wasatch Front are implementing the program and encouraging more than 8,000 elementary teachers to participate.

Child Advocate Mourned
Massachusetts Teachers Association President Meline Kasparian has died at the age of 57. Kasperian, a literature, writing, and theater teacher, "took her profession so seriously that she rose to the top to fight for children," says MTA Executive Director Edward Sullivan.

Public Speaking 101

To safeguard quality education, Wisconsin educators are bringing the public back into public schools.

They teach classes in the hallways in Milwaukee, instruct students on 1970s computers in Racine, and contend with leaky school roofs in Appleton.

Wisconsin school employees are a dedicated lot, but the obstacles some of them face are daunting.

They labor under state "revenue controls" on per-pupil spending—a mere $206 increase is allowed each year—and state caps on salary arbitration awards that are eroding earnings.

Small wonder that 10,000 members of the Wisconsin Education Association Council/NEA and their allies flooded the state capitol last summer to lobby en masse for relief.

Now WEAC is mobilizing its members to reach out to parents and neighbors and build public support for quality public schools.

Through a two-year Vanguard Project, the Association provides 33 key local affiliates—one per UniServ district—with advice, research, training, a networking newsletter, and matching funds. All it asks from them is focus, elbow-grease, and lots of creativity.

Here's how a few of the affiliates are responding:

- The Eau Claire local has formed a speakers cadre to outline the excellence of local schools.
- The Fond du Lac affiliate has organized everything from a community mentoring program and informational breakfasts for business leaders to job shadowing partnerships and a radio forum on education.
- In Watertown, paraprofessionals, custodians, and secretaries are using the local newspaper to publicize the role of support staff in schools.
- The South Milwaukee Education Association holds weekly tutoring sessions and has printed decals reading, "It is far cheaper to prepare students than to repair adults."

Linda Helf, a Vanguard Project leader and a fourth grade teacher at Madison Elementary in Manitowoc, reports that her local has run member focus groups to identify strengths and barriers in the district.

One outcome: the local has identified some articulate spokespeople to make community presentations.

Helf says that Manitowoc educators "want citizens to recognize that the national picture, as presented by the media, does not represent our kids and our schools. We want to tell people the truth and win their trust."

It's too early to say if the WEAC project—now beginning its second year—has changed public perceptions, but Vanguard local leaders like Marcia Engen know they're on the right track.

Engen, president of the Appleton Education Association, says her "prosperous" community needs a wake-up call about the damage wrought by revenue controls—including higher class sizes, outdated computers, and deferred maintenance—and the new challenges the district faces.

"The Fox River Valley where we live is growing fast," says this teacher of gifted and talented elementary kids. "We're getting ethnic diversity we need to deal with, and the poor are hidden from view.

"In the last nine years," Engen continues, "the proportion of low-income students has climbed from 8 to 17 percent. We have to convince business people that we have children who aren't eating and aren't properly clothed."

Third grade teacher Jeanne Schwaller, who chairs the Appleton local's Vanguard Committee, says her top goal is to educate taxpayers that "the schools have changed since they went through them."

To that end, the local has produced a *Your Schools Today* video for cable TV and a brochure profiling Appleton teachers.

This NEA affiliate also builds support for schools by participating in two business groups and inviting business leaders to shadow teachers during American Education Week.

In the process, the local contrasts the good with the bad—state revenue controls and bargaining restrictions.

"Bargaining impacts on the kind of teachers who stay in the profession and what kind of conditions they *and* students work under," Schwaller stresses.

Scott Panella

"We have to convince business people that we have children who are not eating and are not properly clothed."

Marcia Engen, Appleton Education Association

Some of the 33 WEAC project sites

For More Information

Visit WEAC's home page on the Web at www.weac.org.

The Bottom Line

Fewer social promotions: In 1980, fewer than one in four 15- to 17-year-old students were enrolled below the appropriate grade for their age. In 1995, an even one-third of these teenagers were enrolled below their age-appropriate grade.

No guns: More than 6,000 students were expelled for carrying guns to school in 1995-96. The 1994 federal Gun-Free Schools Act and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act, passed the same year, require states to adopt a "zero-tolerance" stance on guns.

The reading habit: In 1964, eight out of every 10 adult Americans regularly read daily papers. The newspaper-reading public is now down below 60 percent. If current trends continue, less than half the nation's adults will be reading dailies by 2015.

Not for nerds: About two-thirds of kids consider their peers who use computers to be "smart," and 28 percent feel kids who use computers are "cool." Only 30 percent of parents with computers at home say they're more cyber-savvy than their kids.

At the National Level

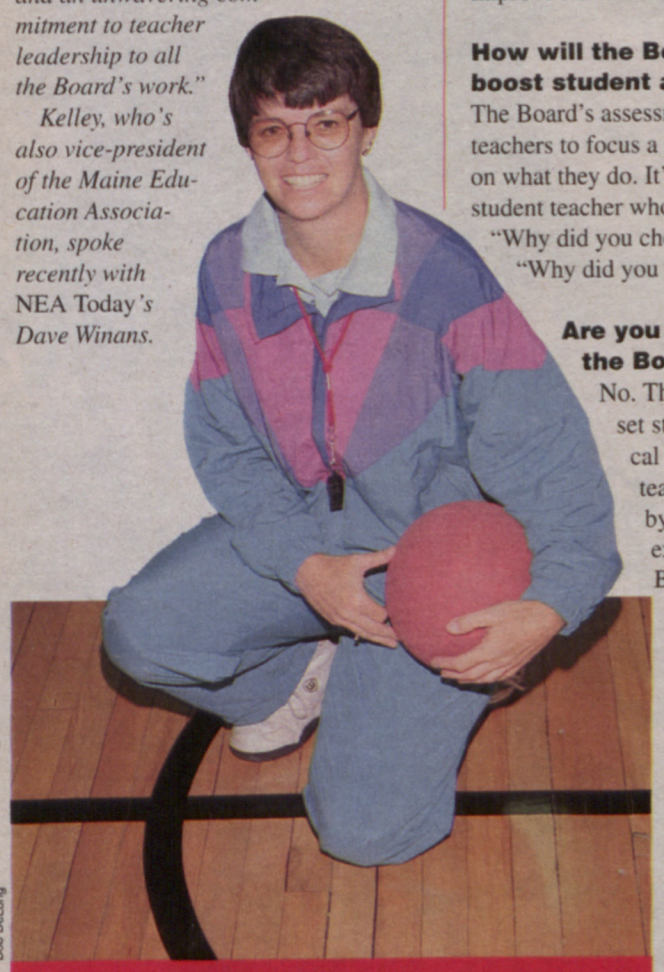
Teacher To Run Standards Board

The new chair of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards leads from the classroom.

Barbara Kelley, a K-3 physical education teacher at Vine Street School in Bangor, Maine, has just been elected to a two-year term as chair of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt Jr., the Board's chair since its founding in 1987, says of his successor: "I can't think of another teacher in America I would trust more with the Board's future than Barbara. She brings a passion for quality teaching and an unwavering commitment to teacher leadership to all the Board's work."

Kelley, who's also vice-president of the Maine Education Association, spoke recently with NEA Today's Dave Winans.



Bob DeLong

Everything the National Board does "involves a majority of practicing classroom teachers," says chair Barbara Kelley.

What makes the National Board unique?

A sacred tenet of the Board is that teachers need to be in control of their profession.

Everything we do, from drafting standards to assessing candidates, involves a majority of practicing classroom teachers. Move to a non-teaching position, and you're required to resign from the Board.

What is the Board's mission?

To establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do, and to develop and operate a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet those standards. The Board's ultimate aim is to improve student learning.

How will the Board's work boost student achievement?

The Board's assessment process forces teachers to focus a magnifying glass on what they do. It's like having a student teacher who continually asks, "Why did you choose this?" or "Why did you do that?"

Are you certified by the Board?

No. The Board hasn't yet set standards for physical educators. But my teaching has changed by virtue of my exposure to the Board's standards in other fields.

These days, I find myself constantly asking: "Am I really reaching every child?"

How did you first get involved with the Board?

It's ironic that my initial skepticism about National Board certification led to my nomination by NEA and my election to the Board.

My early concerns as a physical educator and as a union leader are truly being addressed by the Board in ways that assure me and other "skeptics" who have become involved over the years.

What's your opinion of the Board now?

The fact that I'm now chair is evidence of the fact that teacher leadership is central to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and that the Board doesn't shy away from the tough questions and issues.

The Board also does a wonderful job of utilizing its important players—including NEA, AFT, state boards of education, superintendents, principals, deans of colleges of education, business people, and even two governors.

Why Board chair? Why not run for president of your NEA state affiliate?

I'm a teacher and I love what I do. Being president of the Maine Education Association would have taken me out of the classroom.

Besides, I feel this Board has a greater potential to improve teaching and learning in America than any reform I've seen in 24 years in education—and I feel privileged to be a part of it.

So you're leaving union work?

I'm still a teacher advocate. In fact, my interest in collective bargaining arose out of concern for my profession.

Those who disparage teacher union leaders ought to go into their classrooms. These people bring the same passion to teaching as they do to union work. They're as adamant about advancing student learning as they are about defending teacher rights.

They believe it all serves the same end—the students.

For More Information

Call 800/22TEACH or point your Web browser to www.nbpts.org.

A Quick Primer on The National Board

- The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization governed by a 63-member board of directors, the majority of whom are practicing classroom teachers. Twenty NEA members are on the Board, including President Bob Chase.
- The National Board establishes tough standards for accomplished teachers with a minimum of three years of experience, and operates a voluntary national system to assess and certify educators who meet those standards. Board certification complements state licensure.
- Candidates for certification submit a portfolio—including student work and a video of their best teaching—and visit an assessment center for a test of their content knowledge and teaching strategies.
- Board assessors—teachers who spend at least 51 percent of their workday in the classroom—are trained in both the Board's standards and scoring rubric.
- National Board standards emphasize responsibility for student learning, knowledge of subject matter and subject-specific pedagogy, reflective practice, and collaborative work to enhance student learning.
- Unsuccessful candidates may now "bank" the exercises they pass. They need only re-take the exercises that they don't pass.
- The Board now offers certification in these six fields: Early Childhood/Generalist, Middle Childhood/Generalist, Early Adolescence/Generalist, Early Adolescence/English Language Arts, Early Adolescence and Young Adulthood/Art, Adolescence and Young Adulthood/Mathematics, and Adolescence and Young Adulthood/Science.
- The Board needs more money to meet its goal of certifying teachers in 30 fields. President Clinton and Congress have proposed increasing Board funding for the 1998 federal fiscal year by between $16 million and $21 million.

Drug talk: About half the nation's 17-year-olds—49 percent—say they've never had a serious discussion with their parents about drugs, says a new Columbia University survey. Half of these teens say they know someone who has used acid, cocaine, or heroin.

Dress for success: School districts in 20 states now require students to wear uniforms, and clothing stores are predicting double-digit uniform sales increases in this school year. The uniform trend started just three years ago in Long Beach, California.

College costs: Average tuition costs are up 5 percent this year. Annual charges at public four-year colleges now stand at $2,975. The private college tuition average: $13,664. Overall, 10 percent of students will pay more than $16,000 in tuition this year.

Nasty nutrition: Will America's fast-food giants have it their way in school cafeterias? Could be. Some 13 percent of cafeterias now sell fast food from the likes of Burger King and Arby's, a figure up from just 2 percent in 1991.

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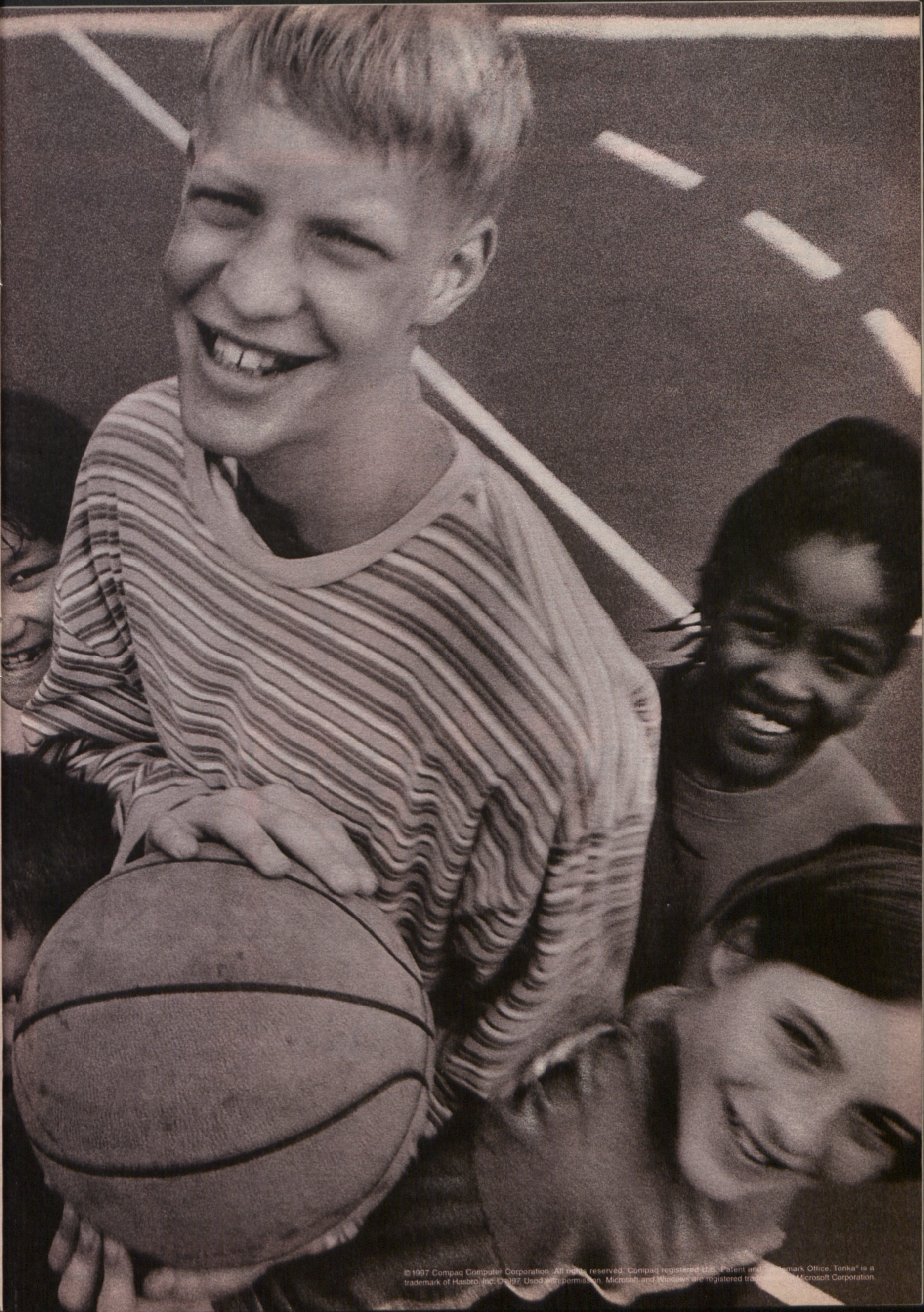

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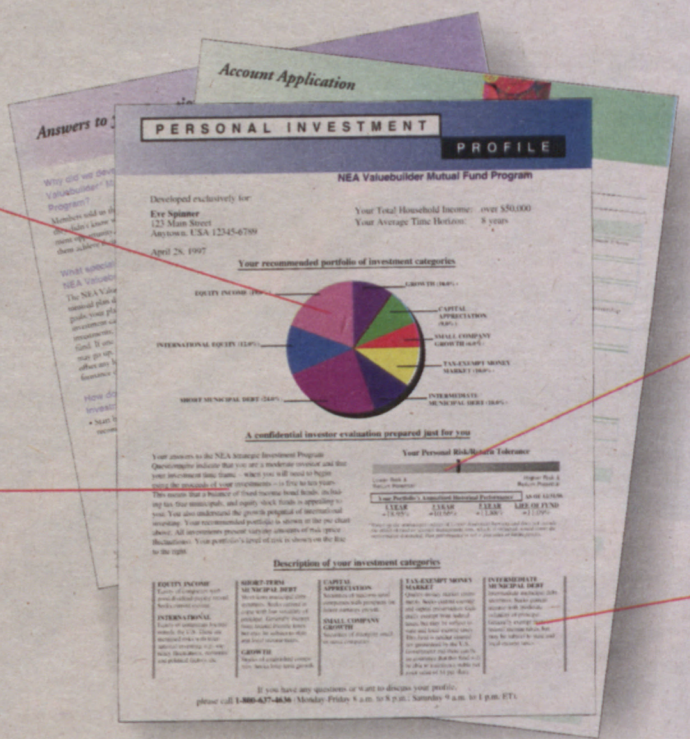
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A confidential investor evaluation prepared just for you
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Description of your investment categories

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"You cannot understand the culture of America if you don't understand the role religion has played," says Utah middle school teacher Martha Ball. Find out how NEA members across the country are incorporating religion into the curriculum while respecting the beliefs of all (pages 20 and 21). Here, seven-year-old Tai Fukumoto lights a menorah for Hanukkah at Seattle's Kimball Elementary.

Martin Westerman

Innovators

What's Missing from Kids' Books

Innovator:
Harriet Rohmer

Job:
Founder of Children's Book Press, a non-profit publisher of bilingual and multicultural children's books

Bright Idea:
Beneath the colorful pictures and creative stories, Rohmer felt, children's books were missing something important: a sense of the diversity of multicultural life.

She decided to start filling this void by forming the Children's Book Press more than 22 years ago.

Now her organization—working with a yearly budget of more than $1 million—is striving to create a "literature of inclusion."

Rohmer starts with a legend or myth from Spanish-speaking countries. Then she draws on oral history, to create a "new kind of book, where the text comes from an oral tradition, with input from the community."

Rohmer prints the text in both Spanish and English, allowing students to retain and build skills in both languages.

"I want to encourage students to keep their Spanish heritage and language, and increase their skills in English," says Rohmer. "This has been very controversial. But I think that this will make a stronger, wiser, more compassionate society, when children grow up with more than one language.

"Books have validity and power," she adds. "When children open a book and see their own culture, they realize they count, and that they're not just outsiders. Everything they do and that's important to them is validated."

Impact:
A literary outreach program in California schools tracks the use of Children's Book Press books in the classroom and trains teachers to incorporate multicultural literature into the curriculum. Upcoming titles will feature children of mixed races, stories on Native Americans, and bilingual poetry.

For More:
Contact Children's Book Press, 246 First St., Suite 101, San Francisco, CA 94105, 415/995-2200.

Thor Swift

Good Job for New Diploma

Innovator:
Polly Fowler

Job:
High school special education teacher, Fayette, Alabama

Bright Idea:
Since 1990, Fowler has argued that special ed students should have a shot at graduating with an occupational diploma, a credential that recognizes more achievement than the traditional completion certificate.

So Fowler was thrilled when the Alabama Department of Education finally adopted such an option earlier this year.

Unlike the certificate, which Fowler says carries no weight with employers, the new occupational diploma will certify special ed students' readiness for the workplace.

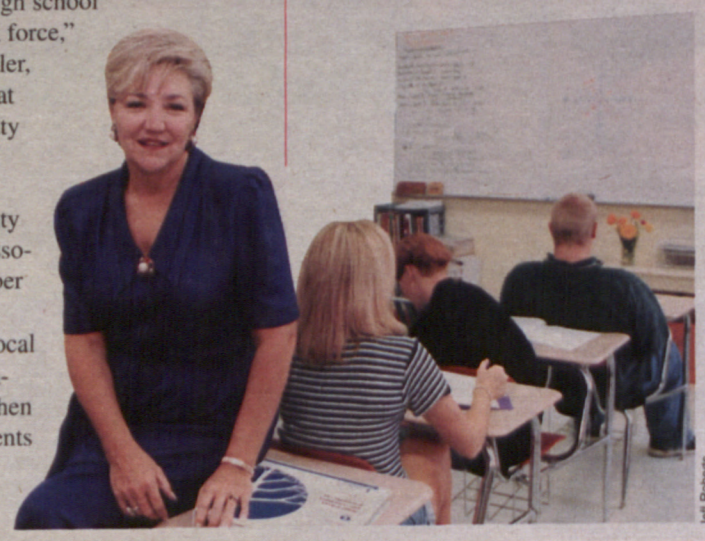
Special ed students who choose the diploma option will take four years of employment-oriented English, math, science, and social studies, and they'll develop a portfolio that showcases job skills.

"The whole idea is to get these students from high school into the work force," explains Fowler, who teaches at Fayette County High School.

Now the Fayette County Education Association member will work to educate the local business community, so when the first students with occupational diplomas start applying for jobs, employers will know they're ready and able to work.

Impact:
Fowler hopes that this new degree will provide special ed students with a better shot at "a good job—not something menial, but something they can stay with."

For More:
Contact Fowler at 205/932-6313.



Jeff Roberts

Parents of The '90s

Learning in Small Moments: Life in an Urban Classroom *by Daniel Meier, Teachers College Press. 162 pp. $18.95. Meier, a San Francisco Bay Area teacher, writes of his first year co-teaching a first grade class—and the reality of building parent-teacher relationships.*

Teaching in an urban public school in the 1990s, we needed to go beyond our initial teacher training and previous teaching experiences and learn new ways to reach out and communicate with families.

While we saw the value of such time-honored events as Back to School Night and parent conferences, we also learned the value of frequent interactions with families as essential for improving home-school relations.

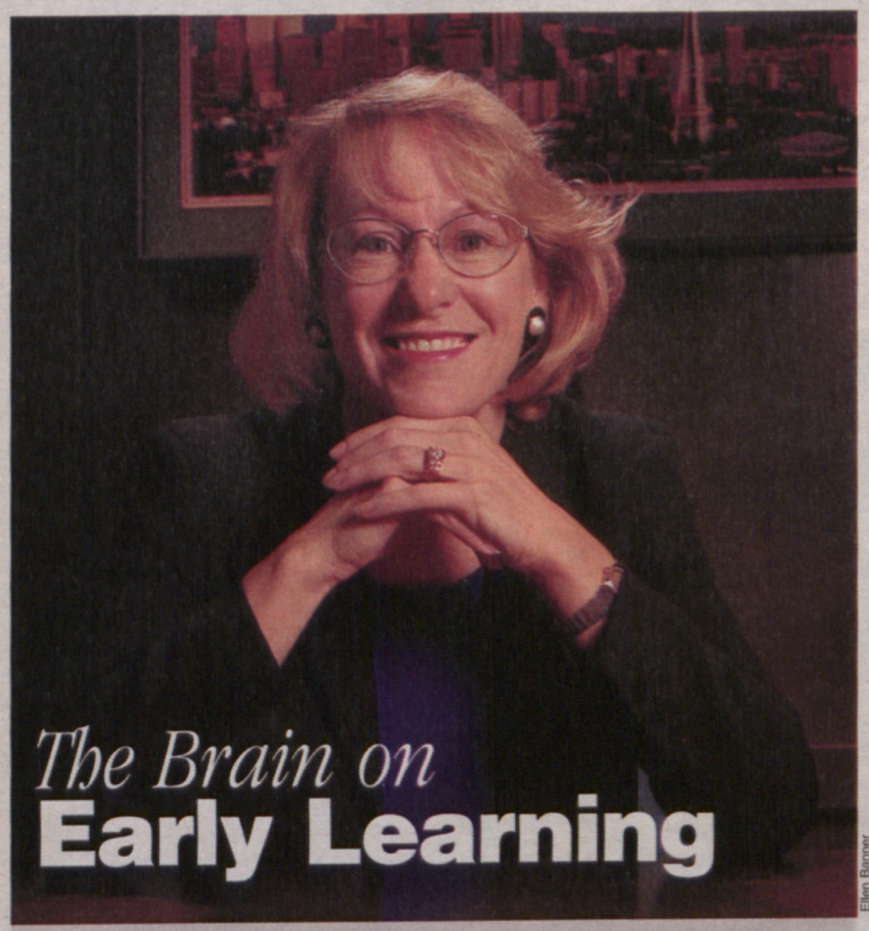
Unfortunately, we didn't see the majority of our families on a daily basis. According to school policy, [co-teacher John Sierra] and I picked up our class on the playground at 8:45 a.m., a time when many of our families were already at work or back home. Other parents worked the swing and night shifts, and needed to catch up on sleep.

Several of our children arrived and left school by bus, or arrived at 7:30 in the morning for the breakfast and day care program, and after school they attended extended day care from 2:20 to 5:45.

Schools need to find new ways to accommodate the modern needs of families in order to promote closer, more frequent home-school contacts.

Much of a teacher's initial and ongoing training is geared toward Everyteacher and Everychild and Everyparent in Everyschool.

Yet when teachers enter classrooms and plunge into the nitty-gritty of human relationships, complicated and frustrating parent-teacher relations bubble to the surface. Creating and fostering mutually satisfying and meaningful relations with families is a complicated, long-term process.



Ellen Banner

The Brain on Early Learning

Patricia Kuhl, chair of the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences at the University of Washington, is one of the nation's leading brain researchers. Kuhl was one of six scientists who spoke at the recent White House conference on early learning.

Q What's the hot news in brain research that educators should know about?

A I'd like to focus their attention on a child's ability to learn when the child is interested. When a child lights up—that's a special kind of learning going on.

Q The brain works best when it's paying attention?

A When your brain is on a topic, there's a 100 percent difference in what you code. If you listen to a lecture and you're blown away by it, your mind is busy structuring new information. You are building something in you that goes way beyond what you heard.

Q What have you learned in your latest research?

A When parents talk to babies, we now realize that they simplify the message. They enhance the sounds. They are producing an ideal signal for the baby's brain to use in mapping the basic information that they're going to have to learn in order to learn language. The vowel sounds, the basic phonemes are the building blocks for future language acquisition.

Q What impact can this new information have on reading instruction?

A Children who have reading difficulties, and more generally kids who have language difficulties, have some problems at the phonetic level.

Discriminating simple sounds from one another—like "b" and "p"—turns out to be difficult. For typically developing kids, it's a piece of cake. A two-day-old discriminates between "baa" and "paa." But not kids with problems.

Q When a child is having trouble hearing sounds, how can educators help?

A What mothers are doing early in development is speaking more slowly. They are producing a more exaggerated version of the signal, and they are also raising the pitch of their voice. This slowed-down speech and simple grammar may help kids who are having trouble.

The National Academy of Sciences is currently reviewing the latest brain research on reading as part of an upcoming report on Preventing Reading Difficulties, *due out early in 1998.* NEA Today *will cover the release of that report in upcoming issues.*

The Six Percent Solution

Innovator:
Rodolfo Alvarez

Job:
Professor of sociology, University of California, Los Angeles

Bob Riha, Jr.

Bright idea:
Now that California voters have banned affirmative action from public college admissions, ensuring diversity at the University of California has become tricky business.

Alvarez has a solution.

His plan is simple: the top 6 percent of students at each of California's 844 public high schools would automatically be admitted to one of eight UC campuses.

Currently, students are pitted against each other in a statewide competition that leaves many predominantly white, suburban schools sending a disproportionate number of kids to a UC.

Alvarez predicts that the plan will net 5,000 students from inner-city and rural schools who might not otherwise have made it to a UC—which will ensure economic, racial, and geographic diversity in freshman classes.

"You'd be competing against your own kind," says Alvarez. "If you can distinguish yourself, doesn't this show ability? And shouldn't that be the person we admit to the University of California?"

The plan, which has piqued the interest of legislators and UC administrators, won't shut out deserving students who don't make their schools' top 6 percent, Alvarez claims. They'll just apply—and largely be accepted—as they always have, in the regular statewide admissions process. With a freshman class of 25,000, there are more than enough seats for qualified students, he says.

Impact:
Schools that do not offer the state curriculum required for UC admission would be excluded from the plan—but not for long, says the plan's co-author. UC Santa Barbara sociologist Richard Flacks notes that affected communities will press for increased funding to keep their kids from missing out. The result: better schools for all communities.

For more:
E-mail Alvarez at alvarez@soc.ucla.edu or Flacks at flacks@alishaw.ucsb.edu.

Tips for Religious Holidays

The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center in Nashville, Tennessee, recommends that educators ask the following questions before planning a religious holiday activity:

1 Is this activity designed in any way to either promote or inhibit religion?

2 Will any student or parent be made to feel like an outsider, not a full member of the community, by this activity?

3 How does this activity serve the academic goals of the course or the educational mission of the school?

4 If in December: Do I plan activities to teach about religious holidays at various times of the year, or only in December?

5 Am I prepared to teach about the religious meaning of this holiday in a way that enriches students' understanding of history and culture?

Source: *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education.* Charles C. Haynes. The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, $9.50. Call 615/321-9588 or check the Web at www.fac.org.

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*Annual Percentage Yield (APY) for the NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate CD is valid from 8/25/97 through 8/31/97, based on a $1,000 minimum opening deposit and a term of 60 months. All other rates are valid as of 8/27/97, based on a $2,500 minimum opening deposit and a term of 60 months. Source — *Meyer Interest Rate Survey*. Penalty may be imposed for early withdrawal of CD principal. Withdrawals and fees may reduce earnings.

***Money* magazine, September 1997.

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Inside Scoop

What's Wrong To Copy Under Copyright?

While surfing the Net, you find perfect material for your unit on the Civil War. You download the file and print out 25 copies for your students. Then you E-mail a copy to 40 educators in your favorite online discussion group.

If there were copyright police lurking in every school corridor, you'd be hearing "Book 'em, Danno."

Welcome to the world of copyright, where the only thing everyone agrees on is that current laws are no longer adequate, especially now that computers, the Internet, and VCRs have expanded the realm of copyright material.

Definition, please.

Part of the Constitution, copyright grants creators exclusive rights to their work for a limited time, so that they can profit from it and control its use. Without this incentive, who would bother to be creative?

These rights are balanced by "the fair use doctrine," which allows, among other exceptions, works to be used for nonprofit, educational purposes without permission or fees.

So if I'm using materials for teaching, am I covered by fair use?

Not always. Four factors determine what's fair: the purpose and character of the use (teaching generally passes); the nature of the copyrighted work (fiction enjoys stronger protection than nonfiction); the amount used (copying an entire work—never a good idea); and the effect of the use on the work's potential market value (if you're taking money out of a creator's pocket, it's probably not fair use).

"As teachers, we think we never can violate fair use since our hearts are in the right place," says Roger Knutsen, president of NEA's National Council for Higher Education and NEA's representative at last year's world conference on copyright in Geneva. But that's not so.

Technology only blurs the lines. It's easy for teachers and students to download and copy film clips, music, graphics, and text from the Internet—but that doesn't mean they should.

How do I know if what I'm doing is considered fair use?

Fair use is a vast gray area. Even the U.S. Copyright Office admits: "The distinction between 'fair use' and infringement may be unclear and not easily defined. There is no specific number of words, lines, or notes that may safely be taken without permission."

Knutsen suggests a "Golden Rule" approach: Put yourself in the copyright owner's shoes and ask if you would object to the use. Or to play it safe, "Ask for permission," Knutsen says. "If you get a no, then you know for sure you shouldn't use it."

But don't people put things on the Internet to be used?

Not necessarily. People put their work on the Internet to increase access to it, but they may still care about protecting their copyright. And just because there's no copyright notice or © symbol on a Web site doesn't mean the content isn't copyrighted.

Are there any materials I don't have to worry about?

Material in what's called the public domain can be used freely by anyone for any purpose. This includes virtually anything from the U.S. government, as well as many older materials.

But even here you must be careful. The image of the *Mona Lisa* is in the public domain. But a particular photo of her hanging in the Louvre might be copyrighted.

Be honest: What will happen if I violate copyright?

Okay, there are no copyright police. In fact, few educators have been sued successfully for infringement. But there are other reasons to obey the law, including showing students the importance of respecting others' work.

Plus, there's a trickle-down effect: If people can't earn money from their creative efforts, they might one day stop producing.

What's more, infringement of copyright strengthens the case of the major content providers, such as the recording and movie industries, who see new technology as facilitating widespread piracy of their products. They've proposed decidedly pro-business changes to copyright law that leave almost no room for free educational use.

What kinds of changes?

Proposals range from automatically billing you for every Web page you access to making schools that provide Internet access liable for students' copyright infringement.

Due in part to efforts by NEA and other groups, the content providers failed to get their changes passed at the Geneva conference. But now they are bringing their case to Congress. Copyright is shaping up to be a major battle in this year's legislative session.

Where's NEA on this?

As a member of the Digital Future Coalition, NEA has joined other education and business groups to lobby against these changes.

NEA supports the Digital Copyright Clarification and Technology Act, which would extend current fair use provisions to the digital environment.

If you run afoul of copyright law while using electronic material, contact NEA's Center for Education Technology at 202/822-7360. Or E-mail NEA at NEAEdTech@aol.com or at jbernstein@nea.org. Staff are looking for anecdotes that show why current copyright restrictions must be updated for the digital age.

—Bonnie Gardner

In the next issue: What protections do you *enjoy* under copyright laws when you create material that others can use?

Drawing the Line

Use of copyrighted materials	DID YOU INFRINGE?	Reason
You videotape *Dateline* and show it to your class.	NO	If you showed it within 10 days of broadcast.
	YES	If you continued to show it when you had time to purchase it.
You purchase software for home and copy it to your school computer.	NO	For your own use, Software Publishers Association says OK.
	YES	Allowing other teachers to copy is strictly forbidden.
Your students create a multimedia collage using Internet graphics, text, and music.	NO	For one-time educational use.
	YES	If the collage is displayed in public on your school Web site.
As part of an E-mail discussion group, you receive a teaching tip. You print it out and distribute 30 copies at an in-service training.	YES	All E-mail is protected by copyright. You need the sender's permission to make copies and display the message publicly.

The law governing copyright infringement is complex. These examples illustrate individual situations and can't be extrapolated to all cases. For more exact details on the laws governing copyright, check the references listed below or the NEA Today Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday.

Need More Information?

■ *Fair Use: Guidelines for Educators* is available free from NEA's Office of Higher Education, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036 or NEAcgr8@aol.com.

■ To keep on top of congressional copyright action, check the NEA Web site at www.nea.org/cet and the Digital Future Coalition at www.ari.net/dfc.

■ *The Copyright Primer for Librarians and Educators* is available from the NEA Professional Library. $20 for NEA members. Stock #1870-2-00-F. Call 800/229-4200 to order.

■ The Web site for Stanford University's law library (fairuse.stanford.edu) provides links to dozens of resources and guidelines on fair use.

Students &

Good Stuff

Religion in Public Schools
The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center's "Finding Common Ground" project provides a wealth of information on public education and religion, including a list of books on religious holidays recommended by elementary school teachers. *Living with Our Deepest Differences: Religious Liberty in a Pluralistic Society*, a U.S. history curriculum, focuses on the story of religious liberty and the role of religion in American life (available for different grade levels). Contact the center at Vanderbilt University, 1207 18th Ave. South, Nashville, TN 37212, 615/321-9588, or on the Web at www.fac.org.

Religion in History
Religion in American History: What To Teach and How contains facsimiles of original documents pertaining to key religious issues in history, background material, and teaching suggestions. $20.95 from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Call 800/933-2723 to order.

Multicultural Guide
Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development provides teacher-developed lessons, essays, and poetry to approach multicultural education from a critical perspective, with an emphasis on social action and battling racism. The 425-page book also includes an extensive resource guide. $20 from Teaching for Change, P.O. Box 73038, Washington, DC 20056-3038, phone 202/238-2379, fax 202/238-2378.

Lessons Learned
In *Reclaiming Our Nation at Risk—Lessons Learned: Reforming Our Public Schools*, 44 top education leaders present their findings and opinions on improving elementary schools by fielding questions as a panel in front of a fictitious "Citizens Committee." NEA President Bob Chase is among the panelists, who describe successful reform models throughout the country and discuss how to get the community to participate in the process. $25 from the Terrel H. Bell Knowledge Network for Education Reform. Call 800/610-9120 to order.

You know you have a problem when . . .

"A student is so hostile and unhappy that he or she can't carry on with any productive work."

Sue Chumbley Schiffer, temporary academic placement teacher, San Lorenzo, California

Dilemma

Presence For the Holidays

What do you do when your students clamor to celebrate Christmas in the classroom?

I have students examine the "No Establishment Clause" of the First Amendment. Once they understand its purpose, and the difference between neutrality and celebration, they realize that to celebrate a sacred holiday violates our Constitution and is inappropriate in a public school.

More importantly, students understand that this issue isn't simply a question of legality, but also one of sensitivity. They learn to be sensitive to others of all religious faiths or none. This is one of our greatest challenges: helping students and all Americans live together with our deepest differences.

Karen Claborn
High school U.S. history teacher
Placentia, California

When my students want to add a little holiday sparkle to the classroom and curriculum, I let them. We celebrate Christmas and any other winter holidays, in all their diversity.

With decorations, stories, food, and music, we share our traditions of Santa, the Nativity, the dreidel, Kwanzaa, ski trips, or hunting.

Even the cynical and most stoic students often participate in the festivities. We divulge insights about ourselves and encourage understanding and tolerance.

Our traditions and rituals shape who we are as people and a society. So the more we know, understand, and respect each other's rituals, the greater our chances of living in harmony.

Some students raise the "separation of church and state" question. I tell them that we're not celebrating any religion—we're celebrating the varying cultural traditions surrounding a date that coincides with a school vacation.

Ted Pitts

Sandra Couch
Communications instructor
Lititz, Pennsylvania

I ask students to research holidays of other cultures and write about a creative character forced into the traditional "mood," as opposed to celebrating. Having students take on this persona leads to an awareness of how often we criticize or ignore people for their beliefs—especially at Christmas.

After 15 years in the classroom, I decided that my students and I needed to know that many societies view Christmas differently from Christian or Protestant traditions.

Teresa Shelton
High school English teacher
Morganfield, Kentucky

I use Christmastime as a teachable moment. Students share their family traditions—religious or non-religious—with their classmates. I sometimes ask students to draw a picture of a family Christmas tradition and provide a caption that explains what is happening. Then we post the pictures in the classroom.

Students often find that their family's Christmas traditions are similar to those of fellow students.

Shawn Kelly Teegardin
Middle school reading teacher
Grant, Michigan

There's no need to clamor. My students celebrate the Festivals of Light, a cultural event that teaches them how people brighten the darkest days of the year.

Students make piñatas and farlitos or luminarias and learn about the Mexican traditions of Las Posadas. They make candelabras called kinaras and weave mats called mkekas to celebrate the African-American holiday Kwanzaa.

They learn about Native American culture by reading about the Raven that brings light to the people during the winter solstice, and about American Christmas by making candles for trees.

We end the activities a day before winter vacation by putting the different kinds of lights together in one of our classrooms and enjoying the variety of foods all the holidays bring.

Some of these ideas come from *Festivals of Light*, a hands-on activity book that covers nine cultures and seven holidays. It's available for $10 from the Children's Museum in Seattle (206/441-1768).

Denise Joynes
Elementary teacher
Seattle, Washington

Got an Answer?

How do you balance competition and cooperation in the classroom?
Send your answer to *NEA Today* by regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at **dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org**. Include your name, educational position, and phone numbers.

Strategies

You know you've been successful when . . .

"Your student writes from juvenile hall to say he wants to come back to school and make something of himself."

Robin Nelson Dime, seventh/eighth grade teacher, San Diego, California

Delight

Discussing All That's Holy

Think religion in the classroom hasn't got a prayer? NEA members learn that it does—if done right.

It was "quite a debate," recalls Salt Lake City middle school teacher Martha Ball. Her Mormon students argued that theirs was the one true church. A Catholic student countered that he'd been told the same about his church.

After working through concepts of religious liberty and mutual respect, one student concluded: "I have to let everybody else believe that their church is the only true church, too."

It was a satisfying teaching moment for Ball, but such a discussion in a public school makes many educators skittish. Frank talk about religion? Doesn't that only lead to trouble?

Not if it's done within constitutionally permissible grounds. And many people are arguing that it can and should be done.

Communities and legislators increasingly are telling public schools that a secular-only view of the world no longer is enough, says First Amendment scholar Charles Haynes. All sides agree "that having students exposed to the religious view of the world is the right and fair thing to do," he says.

But exactly how to present that view is tricky. For the record, it's constitutional to teach about religion as long as the approach is academic and doesn't promote or denigrate any particular faith.

For Ball, this is as easy as discussing the religious principles and holidays of every culture studied in her world geography course at Butler Middle School. Or for her American history students, it's as essential as concentrating on the first struggles for religious liberty in the colonies.

"You cannot understand the culture of America if you don't understand the role religion has played," says this veteran Utah teacher.

Ball may be more comfortable with this issue than many educators are because, for the last few years, she has been part of a religious liberty project sponsored by Haynes's group, the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center.

Through the project, called the "Three *R*'s"—for rights, responsibilities, and respect—educators learn how to talk about religion without running afoul of the Constitution.

"Teaching about religion is not about promoting religion in general, or promoting any particular religion," Ball explains. "It's about promoting understanding."

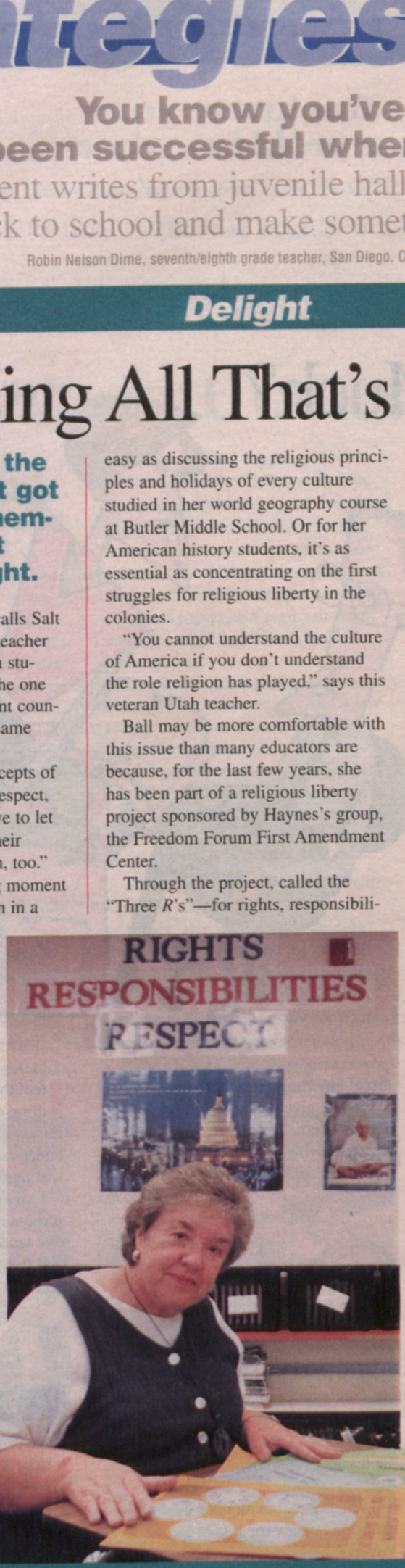
And students are hungry for that understanding, says Kimberly Plummer, a history teacher at de Portola Middle School in San Diego. Based on the questions kids lob at her—What is a pope? Why do people hate Jews?—she knows her students aren't learning about religion elsewhere.

Before Plummer showed the movie *The Ten Commandments* during a unit on ancient Egypt, she sent permission slips home with her sixth graders. She didn't receive a single complaint—in fact, several parents asked if they could come in and watch with the class.

Plummer, who trains colleagues around California in the Three *R*'s project, has this advice for teaching about religion:

- "Teach those things that are constitutionally permissible but educationally sound."
- "Keep communications open with parents and the community."
- "Make all curricular materials available for inspection."
- Above all, says Plummer, "Don't censor yourself. Don't be afraid to take risks."

—Bonnie Gardner



Utah teacher Martha Ball feels at ease discussing religion in her classroom, having studied how to appropriately incorporate the often controversial topic into her curriculum.

Steve Wilson

For More Information

Contact the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, 1207 18th Ave. South, Nashville, TN 37212; 615/321-9588. A wide range of resources is available on the Center's Web site at www.fac.org.

Idea Exchange

Creative Route

At the beginning of the year, bus drivers must fill out a long form listing the names of all students who ride their bus, their grade, where they get on and off the bus, at what times, and mileage. I ask my kindergarten and first grade teachers to put a name tag on each child (and on all new students) the day I plan to note this information.

Then, instead of trying to write the information down as each child enters or leaves the bus, I dictate all the information into a tape recorder. I then transpose this information on the form when I get home.

This saves a lot of time—and a lot of aggravation when traffic is backed up.

Sandy Stancil
Frankin, North Carolina

Wish Tree

I team teach with four teachers, and we have about 115 middle school students on our team. At the first open house, we put a branch in a bucket of sand and attach paper leaves or apples to the branches. On each, we write an item such as tape, scissors, Polaroid film, VHS tapes, paper towels, logic games, Post-it Notes, and other similar items.

We tell the parents at the open house that this is our "wish tree." If they would like to contribute items to their child's class, we invite them to take as many leaves or apples as they want.

We usually have about 20 parents who contribute something, and it really cuts down on our out-of-pocket expenses. By allowing the parents to choose the items, they can spend as little or as much as they like, and we all benefit.

Bruce Hemp
Staunton, Virginia

Want More?

These tips are all from NEA's new E-mail service, Works4Me. It's weekly, and it's free! To sign up, just send an E-mail to lyris @list.nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit your own tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me@list.nea.org.

Families &

Good Stuff

Parents Are Powerful
That's the title of a colorful publication from the Center for Law and Education that urges parents to get involved in their child's learning. *Parents Are Powerful* shows what children should be learning by grade level and provides pointers on ways to help at home and what to ask of educators. Single copies are available free from NEA's Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 202/822-7155. For multiple copies, contact the Center for Law and Education at 202/462-7688.

More Tips for Parents
Parent Power: Your Child's Success in School Begins at Home provides grade-specific tips to parents on how they can help their children become more successful learners. Reading, writing, math, and science activities are listed in this pamphlet. For high school students: a six-step method for sizing up and solving problem situations. Free from NEA's Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 202/822-7155.

Middle School Partners
Working Together: Harnessing Community Resources To Improve Middle Schools offers checklists and tips for building a community coalition to reform middle schools. Focusing on the specifics of educating young adolescents, this 32-page booklet advises parents and educators on working within the education system and forming partnerships with local businesses. Single copies available free from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 250 Park Ave., New York, NY 10177-0026. Fax 212/986-4558.

Welcoming Newcomers
In *Hosting Newcomers: Structuring Educational Opportunities for Immigrant Children*, authors Robert Dentler and Anne Hafner look at metropolitan school districts in California, Arizona, and Nevada to find what creates the best learning environment for immigrant children. Parental involvement, low levels of segregation, and well-paid educators are some keys to success. $21.95 from Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10027.

You know you have a problem when . . .

"Parents pester you to justify how you're teaching and how you choose winners for super student awards."

Jan Bridge, sixth grade teacher, Chino, California

Dilemma

Just Too Much?

How do you handle an overzealous parent?

Ted Pitts

The best way is to listen carefully to the parent. Usually parents are worried about their child's education, but do not understand the process of acquiring a skill.

For example, a parent may want to know why a child failed a math test. By listening, I can explain to the parent that the child failed because he or she did not understand a specific process like regrouping. I let parents know that I have a plan for their child and am willing to work with them.

An overzealous parent is easier to deal with than a parent who will not or cannot get involved.

Marty Pichla
Sixth grade teacher
Fraser, Michigan

An overzealous parent can be quite a handful. It's important to establish first that all parties are discussing what's in the best interest of the student.

Although emotions may influence the discussion, the teacher must always maintain control of the situation. One must keep calm and listen carefully to what the parent is saying. If the teacher remains in control, the parent is left with no reason to be argumentative.

Chester Kaminski
High school English teacher
Jersey City, New Jersey

Listen attentively, make eye contact, and show that you care. Consider inviting a counselor or administrator to the meeting—a third party can prevent anger from turning into abuse. An attentive, courteous audience gives the parent an opportunity to unload frustration, pain, or concern on professionals who care.

If the parent's zeal concerns the child's self-image or possible mistreatment, this helpful attitude will serve to dispel any "angry teacher" image.

Finally, give parents a job related to their concern. Zealous parents could become involved parents and willing advocates for your school.

Vicky Cody
High school English teacher
Evans, Georgia

An overzealous parent can be just an ally in waiting. Parents who are interested need to be utilized to enhance your class.

Keep a "wish-I-had-some-help-to" list handy and sign them up. Most are willing to help out—you just need to be a jump ahead in having a place for their talents and energies to work for you.

In fact, with the number of parents working outside the home, an "overzealous" parent is almost an extinct species.

Jana Dabney
Sixth grade reading teacher
Chickasha, Oklahoma

I feel that empathy is the key to handling an overzealous parent. It's important to let parents know that I understand and sympathize with their feelings.

I remain as calm as possible and present myself professionally. I found that tends to help parents calm down, and they are more open to a reasonable discussion.

Julie Ruhlen
Third grade teacher
Shenandoah County, Virginia

Got an Answer?

How do you get parent buy-in on alternative assessment?

Send your answer to us by regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Include your name, educational position, and phone numbers.

All published respondents will receive a bright *NEA Today* mug.

Communities

You know you've been successful when . . .

"Parents stop you in the store three years after you taught their child to thank you for all you did."

Jane Goodman, junior high science teacher, Midland, Texas

Delight

USS Kentucky Comes Home

Navy sailors take shore leave to shore up a rural school and expand students' horizons.

There's no sea in sight in rural Worthington, Kentucky, but it's the favorite port of call for the crew of a U.S. Navy Trident nuclear submarine.

Twice a year, eight to 10 crew members of the *USS Kentucky* spend a week living with local families and helping out at Worthington Elementary School.

The submariners ride the school bus with students, tutor and play with them, speak to classes about life on a sub—and complete major construction projects for the school.

"We call them our heroes," says Jo Biehle, a fourth and fifth grade teacher who coordinates the visit.

"The kids love them, the community loves them, the parents love them," Biehle says. "They make you proud to be an American."

The partnership began in 1990, when the school of 200 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders decided to adopt the newly commissioned sub named for the state. Students wrote letters and collected Kentucky mementos to send to the sub crew, including a cardinal, bluegrass music, and even hair from the mane of a Churchill Downs thoroughbred.

The *Kentucky*'s top officers were delighted with the gesture. And a few sailors were sent to Worthington to return the kindness.

"We believe in strong, positive role models for children," says Terry Byerly, chief of the boat. "We can think of nothing better than to come out and help with the school."

This fall, eight crew members built a gazebo and butterfly garden. Last year they wired the school building for the Internet—saving the district about $10,000. They've built picnic tables and a shelter, turning school grounds into a favorite spot for community events and family reunions.

"They'll build and do whatever we need to make the school a better place," Biehle says.

The crew members talk to students about the sub's operation, stressing the importance of math, science, and communication skills to their careers.

"Before the crew leaves, everyone wants to be a submariner," says Biehle. "They give the kids a new perspective on the world. Kids' goals in life become much broader."

Students' behavior also becomes shipshape. "They see the discipline. They hear the 'yes, sirs,' they hear them say 'yes, ma'am' to me," Biehle observes.

Adds fourth grade teacher Beverly Evans: "The week they're here, you couldn't expect better kids in your life."

The partnership has drawn the community closer together. Families line up for the chance to host a crew member. During one winter holiday season, residents baked 2,000 cookies and coordinated with the Navy to have the goodies delivered to the sub's top-secret location.

Two years ago, the *Kentucky* returned the hospitality by inviting 35 students on a "submarine sleepover" while the sub was in port in Georgia. The kids were treated like real submariners: lights out at 10, reveille at 5:30, mess hall breakfasts, and two minutes for a shower (all you're allowed at sea).

The crew members visit Worthington at their own expense and on their own time—some returning three or four years in a row.

"When they could be spending time at home, they spend one week of their lives with us," marvels Biehle.

Explains Byerly: "We enjoy being up here. The kids and the community are just great. A week out of our lives is nothing."

—Bonnie Gardner

Craig Cunningham

Kentucky teacher Jo Biehle joins the appreciative audience looking on as Navy officers James Osborne (center) and Terry Byerly construct a new gazebo for Worthington Elementary School.

For More Information

For details on forming school partnerships with the U.S. Navy, contact teacher Jo Biehle at 606/836-8014.

Idea Exchange

Break the Barrier

It's extremely frustrating to try to convey information about a child's academic progress to families who don't speak or read English.

To overcome this language barrier, the Somerset County Education Association developed a check-off card of "commendations" and "concerns" printed in the six second languages most commonly used in our area: Gujarati (spoken in India), Mandarin, Polish, Spanish, Tagalog (spoken in the Philippines), and Vietnamese.

The cards list comments that teachers most often communicate to parents. Commendations include "enthusiastic worker" and "shows improvement." Some of the concerns are "needs to complete homework" and "parent conference requested."

Teachers check off the appropriate comments, and the students bring the cards home to their parents. We're hoping the cards will bring all families into the school community and improve the students' performance in school.

Patricia Von Ostenbridge
North Plainfield, New Jersey

Better Than 'Nothing'

Once or twice a week, I ask my students to give a short report on what they learned that day. They come up with interesting and sometimes surprising answers.

I learned at a conference that this short report task is a good way to prompt students, so that when they go home at night and are asked what they learned that day, they won't respond with the usual "nothing."

Parents report that wonderful conversations occur around student responses.

Susie Heine Olesen
Greenfield, Iowa

Share Your Ideas

You can pass along your classroom tips to *NEA Today*'s over 2.2 million readers in one of four ways:

- By mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- By phone: 202/822-7201
- By fax: 202/822-7206
- By E-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org

Health

From the Network

The NEA Health Information Network suggests the following helpful resources.

Great Day To Quit
November 20 is the Great American Smokeout. For free flyers, pamphlets, and news releases, contact the American Cancer Society at 800/ACS-2345.

Breathe Easy
How Healthy Is the Air in Your Home? is a room-by-room checklist produced by the Consumer Federation of America. Individual copies are available free to teachers and students by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope with the request to the Consumer Federation of America, P.O. Box 12099, Washington, DC 20036.

Talking about Epilepsy
The Epilepsy Foundation of America is developing a "Teen Chat Room" for use during school hours so teenagers with epilepsy can share their personal experiences about this seizure disorder. Teachers can assign students to the site for hands-on experience in using the Internet. For more information, visit the Foundation's Web site at www.efa.org.

Keep Kids from Tobacco
Help support the recent Food and Drug Administration rule prohibiting retailers from selling cigarettes and smokeless tobacco to anyone under the age of 18. Call 800/FDA-4KIDS to obtain a free copy of the poster, in English or Spanish, and ask local retailers to display it in their windows.

World AIDS Day
World AIDS Day is December 1. The theme: "Children Living in a World with AIDS." For more information, visit the American Association for World Health's Web site at www.aawhworldhealth.org.

Mark Your Calendar
Women's personal health calendars, available from the NEA Health Information Network, include reminders to practice breast self-exams and information on breast and cervical cancer resources. To request a copy, call 800/718-8387.

Exercised Over Diabetes

Dr. Mayer B. Davidson, currently president of the American Diabetes Association, is the associate director, clinical diabetes, at the City of Hope Hospital in Los Angeles, California, and a clinical professor of medicine at the UCLA School of Medicine. He spoke recently with Michele Hodak of NEA's Health Information Network.

What is diabetes?
Diabetes is a disease in which the body doesn't produce or properly use insulin.

There are two kinds of diabetes. Type I diabetes is due to a destruction of the cells in the pancreas that make insulin. People with Type I diabetes must take daily insulin injections to stay alive.

Type II diabetes results when a body has trouble using insulin properly and the pancreas can't produce the extra insulin to overcome this resistance.

Diabetes is associated with long-term complications that affect the eyes, kidneys, and nerves, and it increases the chances of having heart attacks, strokes, and trouble with circulation to the legs.

How prevalent is this disease in the United States?
Overall, diabetes occurs in about 6 to 7 percent of the population. Of the 16 million people who have diabetes, half don't know it.

Diabetes is more common in certain ethnic groups: 9.6 percent of African Americans, 15 percent of Hispanics, and 20 percent or more of Native Americans have diabetes. About 20 percent of people over 65 have it.

How many children suffer from diabetes?
Type I diabetes affects 127,000 school-aged children. There is no epidemiological data on the exact number of children who have Type II diabetes.

Why are the numbers so high?
Type I diabetes has been increasing a little, but Type II diabetes is increasing at a much higher rate primarily because of environmental factors—obesity and sedentary lifestyles.

How does diabetes affect learning?
Diabetes itself doesn't affect learning, but a complication from Type I diabetes called hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar, can impair learning.

If a diabetic's blood sugar drops below normal, the person can become lethargic and pass out. But these acute episodes would affect learning for a short period of time, not chronically.

How does diabetes affect behavior in the classroom?
If a child's blood sugar level remains normal, then behavior should not be affected. But if it drops below a normal level, then the child's behavior can become erratic. This points out the need to monitor blood sugar levels several times during the day.

Do students with diabetes face special limitations?
The only limitation students face is to make sure that their blood sugar levels do not go too low. That involves having them eat at appropriate times and eat a little extra, if they are going to exercise excessively. It also involves monitoring their blood sugar level.

How can educators tell if something is going wrong for a student with diabetes?
Often a student will perspire or tremble or their eyes might glaze over, and they may be unresponsive or inattentive. Another sign is if a child behaves differently than normal.

Then the teacher needs to be knowledgeable about what to do—which is to get some sugar into the student.

Are schools adequately staffed and equipped to handle students with diabetes?
Probably not. The two related reasons for this are a shortage of school nurses and lack of diabetes education for teachers. These are related because nurses are the likely providers of this education for the teachers.

How can educators help students prevent the onset of diabetes?
Type I diabetes is really not preventable at present. Since Type II diabetes is appearing more now in children—particularly African American, Hispanic, and Native American children—educators can reinforce the important messages on environmental factors, like exercise and keep weight within normal ranges.

Resources

- November is National Diabetes Month. For information and posters, buttons, and brochures (free in limited quantities), contact your local chapter of the American Diabetes Association. To find your local chapter, call 800/232-3472.
- *Children with Diabetes—Information for Teachers and Childcare Providers* offers useful background from the American Diabetes Association. For a free copy, plus information on other publications, contact the ADA at 1660 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314 or call 800/342-2383 Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET.
- The American Diabetes Association Web site (www.diabetes.org/ada/new.html) provides the latest news on diabetes, a quick self-test that lets you determine your risk for diabetes, information on an array of publications dealing with diabetes, and a healthy "Recipe of the Day" to help your diet stay on track.

Rights Watch

When the Reviews Are In . . .

Can you be sued for participating in a peer assistance and review program?

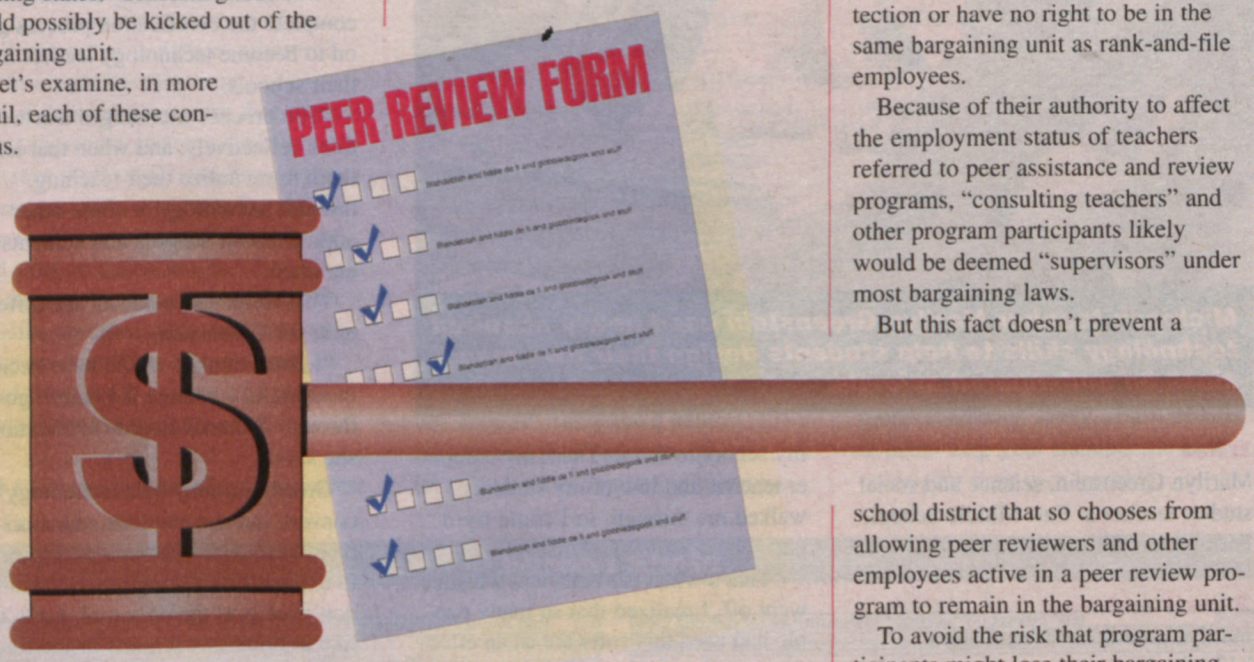
In the 1997 NEA Representative Assembly debate on peer assistance and review, several delegates asked whether such programs might create "legal problems" for local NEA affiliates.

Potential problems do exist, but affiliates can stay out of lawyers' offices—and out of court—if they engage in careful planning and consult with local counsel before adopting any peer assistance and review program.

One major area of legal concern is civil liability—the threat of being sued for money damages.

Another concern: In collective bargaining states, "consulting teachers" could possibly be kicked out of the bargaining unit.

Let's examine, in more detail, each of these concerns.



■ **Civil Liability.** When a teacher is fired, there's always a risk that anyone involved in the termination process will be sued for money damages.

Last year, for example, Ivy Featherstone, an Ohio teacher from who was dismissed after going through the peer assistance and review (PAR) program in Columbus, sued the school district and the Columbus Education Association.

Featherstone also named as defendants the CEA president and the Association building rep who recommended that he undergo a PAR intervention.

Among other charges, Featherstone's lawsuit claims that the defendants discriminated against him because of his race, breached his teaching contract, deprived him of due process and other federal constitutional rights, and violated the union's duty of fair representation.

Featherstone has asked the federal court to award him $2 million in compensatory damages and $4 million in punitive damages. But the chances of Featherstone prevailing are slim and none.

In cases of this sort, the courts have made clear that the defendants will win if they've acted in "good faith" and made decisions based on their best professional judgment. And there is no evidence in Featherstone's case to suggest otherwise.

Lawsuits of this sort are rare. The Featherstone case, in fact, is the first and only time that the Columbus Education Association has been sued in the more than 10 years of operation of the Columbus peer review program.

Still, any local affiliate thinking about adopting a peer assistance and review program should take steps to ensure that consulting teachers and others participating in the process have protection from civil liability.

One way to do this is through liability insurance. NEA higher education members are already covered for peer review activities through the NEA Educators Employment Liability program.

Because of NEA's past opposition to peer review at the K-12 level, however, this liability program historically hasn't covered peer review-related activity for K-12 members. But NEA state affiliates now have the option to purchase this coverage, and 10 states have already done so for the 1997-98 school year.

Next year, NEA will consider whether to provide such expanded coverage to all K-12 members.

NEA local affiliates also can lobby or negotiate with their school districts to indemnify and defend, or hold harmless, individuals who participate in peer review activities. At the state level, an NEA state affiliate can promote legislation to provide immunity from lawsuits for participants in peer assistance and review programs.

■ **Bargaining Unit Status.** The new NEA resolution on peer assistance and review states that such programs should "guarantee" that teachers involved in reviewing their peers not lose their "bargaining unit status" by virtue of their participation.

In most states that allow public sector bargaining, school employees who exercise "supervisory" authority either are excluded from bargaining law protection or have no right to be in the same bargaining unit as rank-and-file employees.

Because of their authority to affect the employment status of teachers referred to peer assistance and review programs, "consulting teachers" and other program participants likely would be deemed "supervisors" under most bargaining laws.

But this fact doesn't prevent a school district that so chooses from allowing peer reviewers and other employees active in a peer review program to remain in the bargaining unit.

To avoid the risk that program participants might lose their bargaining unit status, an NEA local affiliate should negotiate a provision that has the school district agreeing to continue to recognize the bargaining unit that includes these employees. If the district won't agree to such a contract clause, then the Association probably should not proceed with the peer assistance and review program.

The bottom line: The implementation of a peer assistance and review program will raise legal issues that need to be addressed at the local level, but these issues can be resolved and need not deter an affiliate from moving forward with the kind of program envisioned by the NEA resolution on peer assistance and review.

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

Duty of Fair Representation

In collective bargaining states, the adoption of a peer assistance and review program might raise "duty of fair representation" problems for NEA local affiliates.

Can NEA members who lose their jobs because they fail to improve during participation in a peer assistance and review program insist that the union challenge their termination—and then sue the union for violating its duty of fair representation if the union refuses?

The essence of a union's duty of fair representation is the legal obligation to treat all members of the bargaining unit fairly.

This doesn't mean that the union has to file a grievance or go to arbitration every time a member demands it.

Rather, the union will have met its obligation if it makes decisions about whether to provide representation:

- in "good faith."
- in a non-arbitrary manner.
- without discriminatory motive.

These same general rules apply to requests for assistance from NEA members who have been terminated after going through a peer assistance and review program.

So, if a local union decides to deny a member's request for assistance because it has made a "good faith" decision that a challenge to the termination is unlikely to succeed, then it need not worry about a duty of fair representation claim.

In any event, most NEA affiliates already enjoy legal protection from such claims that seek money damages.

All but three affiliates are covered by NEA's Association Professional Liability, which will pay for the legal defense of such lawsuits and up to $1 million in damages.

Nonetheless, all NEA local affiliates should constantly monitor their peer assistance and review program to ensure the integrity of the process and hopefully avoid the potential for any kind of litigation.

—Michael D. Simpson

Bits & Bytes

Bytes for Beginners

I'm in charge of a Technology Night at our elementary school. Any ideas about what we can do? Local computer dealers are not interested in attending unless we can guarantee at least 400 people!

We consulted teachers we know who've hosted a few Technology Nights at their schools. Here's what they had to suggest.

Assuming that you aren't starting at ground zero, showcase what you're doing with what you have!

One school district surveyed all the technologies used in each school, and then designed an evening where teachers and students demonstrated projects related to the existing technology.

The evening started with a forum to let the audience hear about what was going on in every classroom and grade level. This gathering provided a great opportunity for students, teachers, and administrators to tell the community about the school's hopes—a not-so-subtle "if we only had the hardware, software, staff, etc." pitch.

Be sure to include senior citizen groups in Technology Nights. Experience has shown that seniors can be very supportive of technology in schools at election time—if they've had a chance to witness first-hand how kids are benefitting from it.

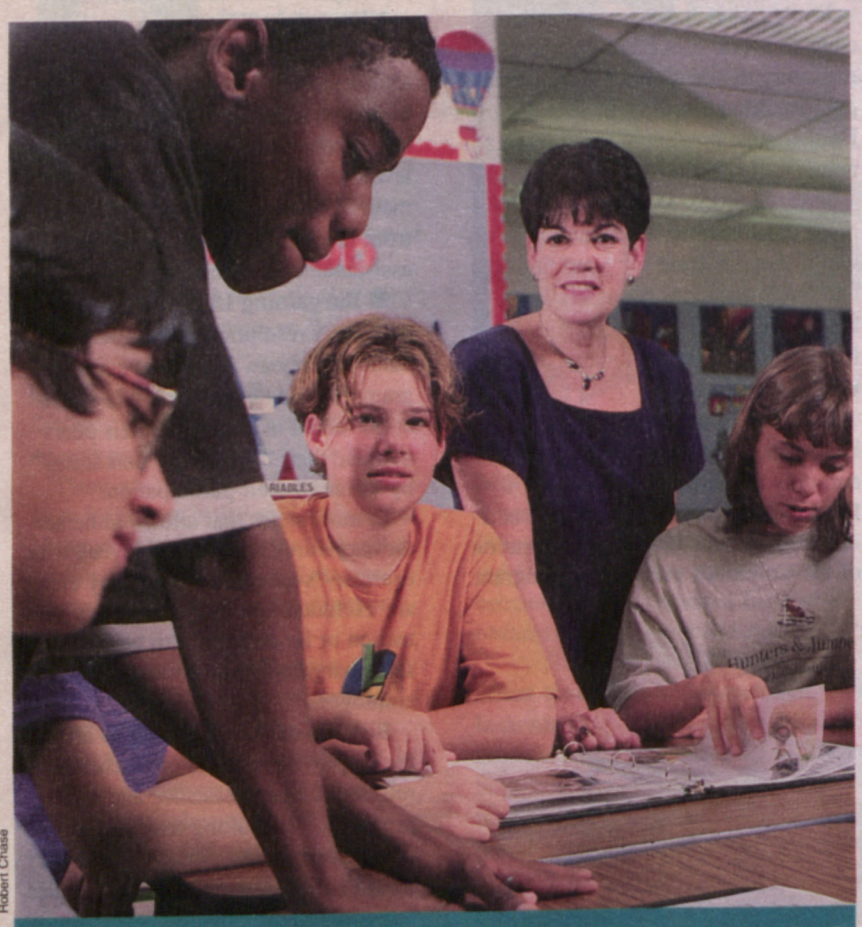
Once you've developed a plan to inform the community about your school's use of technology, re-invite local technology business leaders. Ask them to showcase specific hardware and software that would add value to your school.

But keep their demonstration separate from your school's demonstrations. That way, the community will clearly see what's possible—what your school doesn't have—and vendors will see the connection you've made with the community. That's synergy they just might want to experience, too.

Have ideas, comments, or questions about technology? You can E-mail webeditor@dear.nea.org or write to Dear Webeditor, NEA Center for Education Technology, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Check out www.nea.org/cet on the Web for more Q&As.

Friendly User

Never too Late To Learn



Robert Chase

Michigan teacher Marilyn Greenstein used newly acquired technology skills to help students design their own magazines on endangered animals.

Who:
Marilyn Greenstein, science and social studies teacher at East Middle School, Farmington Hills, Michigan.

E-mail address:
marilyn.greenstein@farmington.k12.mi.us

What:
While pursuing National Board certification, Greenstein had an epiphany: She was way behind in using technology in the classroom. She vowed to change.

Inspiration:
"I was in the first group of teachers to go through national certification in 1993-94. Part of the certification process was 15 hours of videotaping myself in the classroom. When I watched the tapes, it was very clear that technology was missing.

"I was given a copy of Sim City, a computer simulation game, to play with and then write an assessment of its usefulness for my classroom. At first, I couldn't even get a computer in my school to run it. Then, my computer teacher and two of my students walked me through, so I could try it out.

"That's when the bells and whistles went off. I realized that so many people had used this software as an effective teaching tool, and I didn't even know it existed."

Lesson:
Greenstein left the National Board testing center with her certificate and a renewed sense of purpose. After 27 years in the classroom, she would learn what this technology business was all about and bring the best tools and applications to her students.

"The potential for the computer to support my program is a whole new dimension for me, and I'm really excited by that," she says. "For example, there's an Internet resource that lets kids get in touch with scientists. There's so much opportunity for the community, for the world to come into my classroom."

Greenstein took training classes and mastered some software programs. Her personal upgrade coincided with her school's, which added two computer labs, a computer teacher, and a technician to its arsenal of technology resources.

Her determination has had roaring results. For last year's interdisciplinary unit on "Animals in Crisis," Greenstein's students used a software package called Hyperstudio to create their own magazines, banners, and multimedia presentations, complete with music, sounds, and images. They also used the Web to gather information from animal preservation groups worldwide.

Says Mary Catherine Buday, a staffer at the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards: "We've found that many teachers who complete the certification process go on to become technology leaders in their schools.

"The process encourages teachers to think reflectively, and when that leads them to revitalize their teaching, through technology or some other approach, our schools and students are enriched."

That reflection made all the difference for Greenstein.

"I don't think it would have been as meaningful a change if I hadn't gone through National Board certification," she says.

Greenstein may be a technology convert, but she cautions educators to be discerning: "Technology is a tool to extend the learning process, but I don't see it as the only tool. I don't like to think that schools of the future will just have students sitting in front of screens. Technology shouldn't be *instead of* the teacher's hand. It's an *extension of* the teacher's hand."

Click:
"I'm nowhere near being done," says Greenstein. "I have so much to learn. As a veteran teacher, technology is exciting for me. It keeps me fresh and energetic. It's never too late for veteran teachers to learn new things."

For More Information

For further information about national certification, contact the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 300 River Pl., Suite 3600, Detroit, MI 48207, 313/259-0830, or go to www.nbpts.org on the Web.

Click Here

In-Service Goes Online

Educators agree on the importance of professional development, but scheduling problems and geography often present barriers to lifelong learning, leading to feelings of isolation from peers and the latest trends.

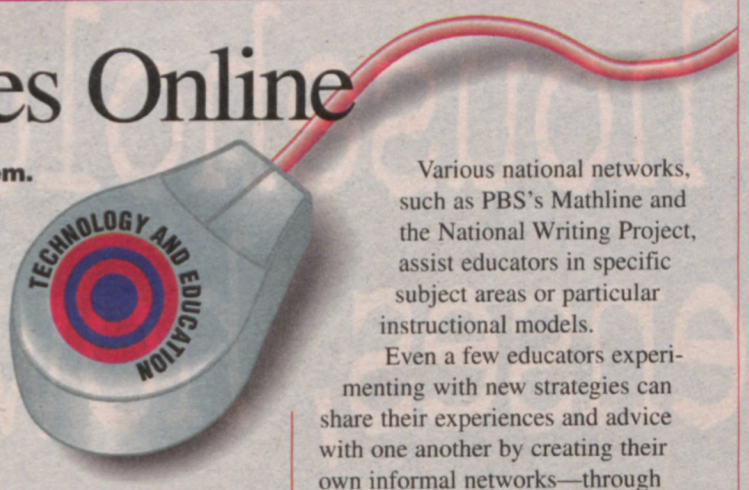
Fortunately, technology is beginning to tear down the walls and create learning opportunities unlimited by time or distance. NEA's Center for Education Technology offers some hints for educators who want to keep learning.

How can technolgy help me tap into professional development opportunities?
From VCRs and basic telephone service to satellite connections and advanced telecommunications, technology offers a wide range of instruments that can facilitate structured professional development.

A videotaped program that models new classroom strategies can greatly enhance staff understanding of the latest practices—and can be shown at a faculty meeting or taken home and viewed individually.

Interactive presentations through satellite or other advanced connections let educators communicate in "real time" with experts and peers throughout the country or world.

All I have is a basic computer and modem. Can I still use technology for my personal professional development?



Absolutely! Many of the most exciting developments fostered by technology are the formal and informal networks being established online. These electronic discussion groups have proven to be a powerful tool for educators by facilitating communication and documenting "action research" findings. A computer and modem are all you need to join the conversation.

Best of all, you can log into these formal networks based on your schedule, not at a preset time and place established by others.

Many states now help support electronic networks that connect school staff interested in receiving peer counseling and advice from technology experts. University teacher education programs and K-12 schools also are teaming up via networks to learn from one another. Baltimore's public schools and the University of Maryland are collaborating this way.

Various national networks, such as PBS's Mathline and the National Writing Project, assist educators in specific subject areas or particular instructional models.

Even a few educators experimenting with new strategies can share their experiences and advice with one another by creating their own informal networks—through E-mail or personal Web pages, for example.

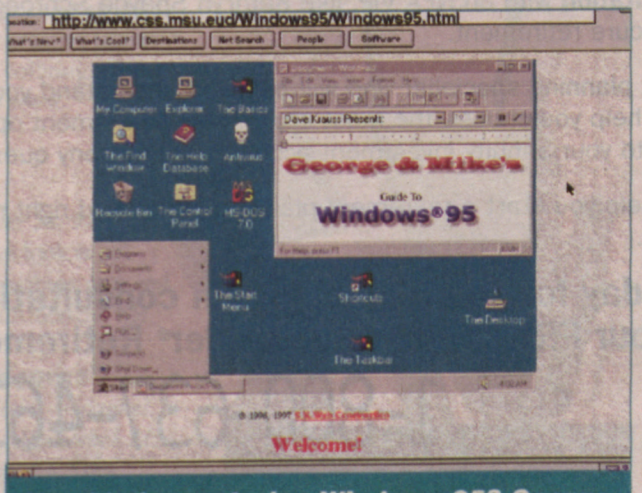
How about surfing the Net? Will I find any serious professional development there?
The Internet offers a wide selection of materials that can enhance your knowledge base, plus many resources specifically geared toward assisting educators.

On NEA's Website (www.nea.org/cet) and on the NEA-sponsored 21st Century Teachers site (www.21ct.org), you'll find plenty of assistance and instructional aid, as well as links to other Internet sites created specifically for anyone in the business of education.

Remember, using technology for professional development may have an additional payoff. As you become more technically savvy, you'll be able to better help your students use technology for their own learning.

Screen Shots

Internet Resources for Music Teachers (www.isd77.k12.mn.us/resources/staff pages/shirk/music.html) has something for every music educator. The site features job postings as well as links to biographies and pictures of great composers, nontraditional music sites, and newsgroups.



Need help mastering Windows 95? George and Mike's Guide to Windows 95 (www.css.msu.edu/Windows95/Windows95.html) is an online tutorial geared to the novice user. Helpful resources include a Frequently Asked Questions page and a What's New section.

New & Noteworthy

Homework Helper
Ten-year-old Bruce collaborated with his dad to develop B.J. Pinchbeck's Homework Helper, at http://tristate.pgh.net/~pinch13/. They have amassed a collection of more than 380 sites that can help you locate information on a wide range of topics.

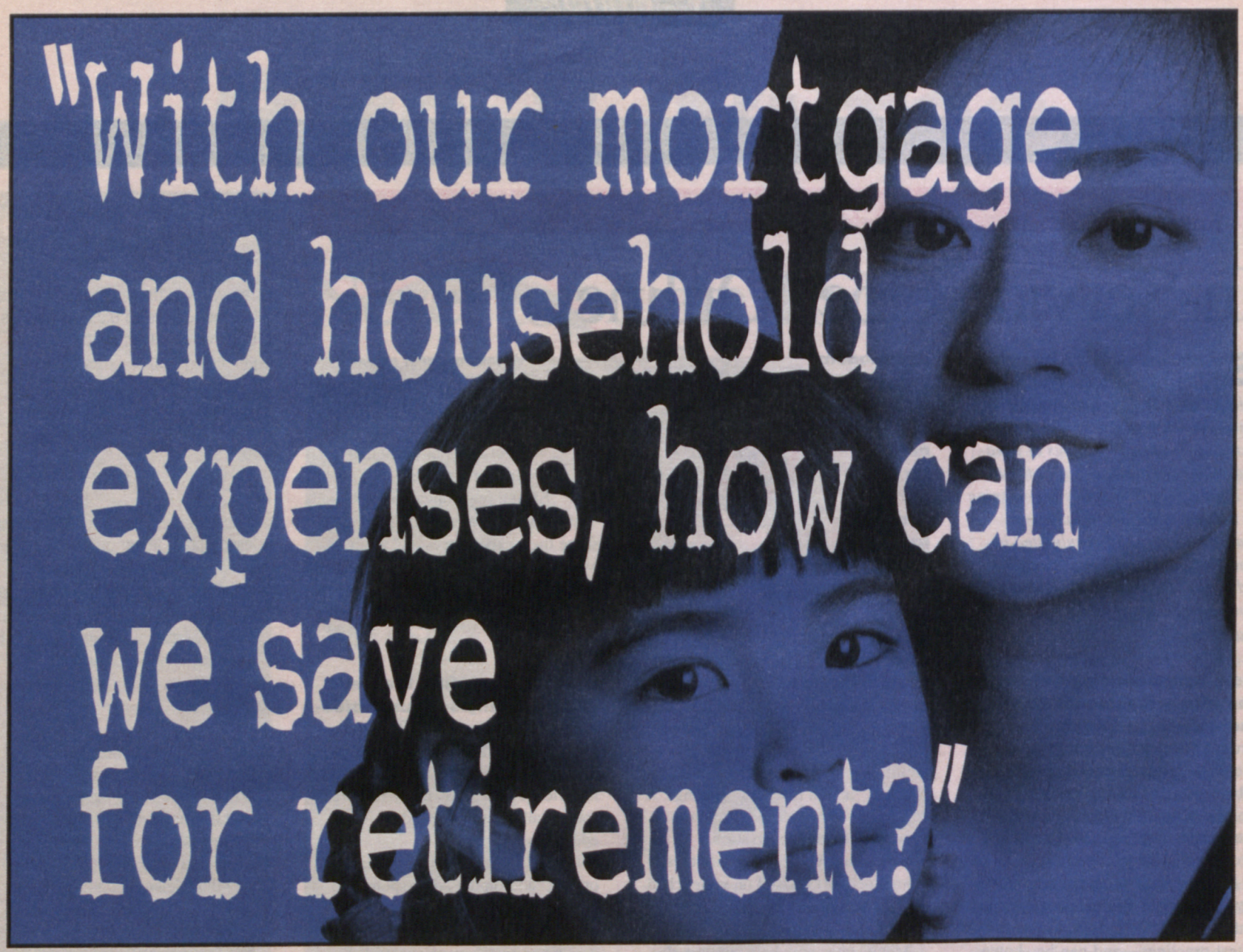
ABC's of Surfing
Teacher Tammy Payton has included lesson plans in her published write-up of Surfing for ABC's, a project that helps K-3 students learn to use the Internet by searching for topics on every letter of the alphabet. Go to www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/abcproj.htm.

Technology Policies
The American Association of School Administrators has listed sample technology plans, acceptable use policies, and other resources on its Web site. Go to www.aasa.org/FrontBurner/TechPlans/plansTC.htm.

Evaluating Resources
The Evaluation Center (www.EDsOasis.org/Guidelines.html) lists 30 guidelines for evaluating online instructional resources for classroom use. ED's Oasis uses these guidelines to bestow ED's A-OK Award of Excellence, given to sites that are educationally sound.

Software Reviews
The Eisenhower National Clearinghouse has published the results of the Ohio Schoolnet Software Review Project (SSRP) in a free publication. This project reviewed software for K-4 classrooms using teacher-developed protocols. To order *The ENC Focus on SSRP: Software for Problem Solving and Inquiry in Grades K-4*, contact ENC, The Ohio State University, 1929 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1079, 800/621-5785.

Technology Honor Society
You can start a chapter of the American Technology Honor Society (ATHS) in your school. ATHS's mission is "to promote and recognize in students technological literacy, including the creative and responsible use of technology, scholarship, commitment to service, and leadership." For details, visit the Web site at www.nassp.org/aths/aths.htm or call 703/860-0200.



You'd be surprised.

Kathryn Spayde Schroeder, NEA VIP

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VBNT1197

Heads Up!

TV Tips

The Legend of Calamity Jane
WB Network, Saturdays, 10-10:30 a.m. ET. Native-American mythology, contemporary allegories, and a dynamic free-spirit named Calamity Jane round out this animated series based on the legends of the Old West.

PBS

Oliver Twist
ABC, November 9, 7-9 p.m. ET. Charles Dickens's world of young thieves and rascals is re-created in this new film, which airs as part of *The Wonderful World of Disney*.

Rabbit Ears Radio
Public Radio International, check local listings for date and time. This weekly half-hour radio program celebrates music and storytelling traditions from a range of cultures. Each week, a celebrity host narrates a classic story, such as *Treasure Island* or *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

The Living Edens: Manu, Peru's Hidden Rain Forest
PBS, Wednesday, November 12, 8-9 p.m. ET. This natural history program takes viewers to the Manu Biosphere Reserve for a look at the abundant life in the rare Amazon wilderness.

Nova: Treasures of the Sunken City
PBS, Tuesday, November 18, 8-9 p.m. ET. In this episode, underwater photography reveals the ancient wonders of the lost city of Alexandria, Egypt, including a giant sphinx dating from 30 B.C.

Marconi: Whisper in the Air
Arts & Entertainment Network, Friday, November 21, 7-8 a.m. ET. A look at the life and inventions of Guglielmo Marconi, the 19th century scientist whose experiments brought us the wireless radio.

Disney Channel

Understanding
TLC, Sunday, November 23, 9-11 p.m. ET. In the first hour, *Electricity* explains what it is, where it comes from, and how it works. In the second hour, *Space Travel* looks at everything from gravity to futuristic prototypes for space tourism.

KCTA

Liberty! The American Revolution
PBS, Sunday-Tuesday, November 23-25, check local listings for time. This six-part documentary covers the birth of the American republic, from the rebellion against the British, through the Revolutionary War, and up to the creation of the Constitution.

Pappyland
TLC, Thursday, November 27, check local listings for time. This six-hour Thanksgiving Day marathon will feature 12 episodes. Featuring Pappy Drewitt (photo, at right) and his friends, the show helps children aged 3 to 11 discover their creative talents through drawing and coloring. Direct interested children to www.pappyland.com.

Skin Deep
PBS, Friday, November 28, 9-10 p.m. ET. A provacative look at college students' attitudes about race and diversity in American life.

Pythagoras
The History Channel, Friday, November 21, 8-9 a.m. ET. The History Channel classroom series looks at Pythagoras, the philosopher and religious leader responsible for many important developments in the history of mathematics, astronomy, and music.

Pop-Sci
The Discovery Channel, Sundays, 11:30-Noon ET. This show takes teenagers on a tour of the latest in the ever-changing high-tech world—from material wonders to gizmos and gadgets—and makes learning about science a wild ride.

The Journey of Allen Strange
Nickelodeon, premiering in November, check local listings. This new series explores the relationship between two kids—one human, the other alien. The show takes a humorous look at childhood issues, as the kids have typical problems at school, home, on the playing field, and with their friends.

Going Wild!
Disney Channel, Sundays, 7-7:30 p.m. ET. This adventure series follows animal expert Jeff Corwin (photo, below left) on treks around the world. Emphasizing conservation, Corwin gives viewers hands-on and up close encounters with featured animals.

Don Perdue

These listings were provided by KIDSNET, *a national computerized clearinghouse for children's electronic media. For additional listings and information, check the* KIDSNET *Web site at www.familyeducation.com/kidsnet.asp.*

school stories

Tired of attacks on public schools? Want to see the real stories inside America's school hallways and classrooms? *School Stories*, a joint production of NEA and The Learning Channel, introduces you to educators who are tackling the tough issues—and succeeding. Here's the schedule:

High-Stakes Testing
Sunday, November 9, 9 a.m. ET. Two years ago, only 21 percent of Milwaukee's students passed a math exam required for graduation. Recently, 90 percent of seniors passed the same math exam. Here's the story of a community that rallied to help its students.

Single-Sex Classes?
Sunday, November 16, 9 a.m. ET. Single-sex classrooms have stirred a great deal of controversy over the years. In a suburban Virginia school, a group of teachers decided to conduct their own test. They had students attend both single-sex and mixed classes for the past three years. A look at the results.

Great School by Design
Sunday, November 30, 9 a.m. ET. Over the last five years, a small elementary school in Chula Vista, California, has become a top "tourist spot" for some 8,000 educators. Why? Staffers have boosted achievement levels by addressing the needs of their diverse student body. Two students explain all.

A Sense of Community
Sunday, December 7, 9 a.m. ET. For eight years, North Carolina principal Steve Scroggs, his staff, and the surrounding community worked together to run a great elementary school in a poor, rural area. Then Scroggs left for his hometown to build an elementary school from scratch. The resource-filled school looks great, but there have been struggles.

BONUS: An added plus for NEA members: Each episode of *School Stories* is available on video after airing. For details or to order tapes, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200. In addition, educators have permission to tape the shows for future educational use.

Heads Up

Free or Inexpensive

Quotes of Note

Teachers say it best, especially in *The Heart and Wisdom of Teaching*, a collection of thought-provoking quotations for teachers, compiled by Esther Wright. $10.95 plus $2 s&h. To order, contact Teaching from the Heart, P.O. Box 460818, San Francisco, CA 94146, 800/798-2686. Send E-mail to dearesther@aol.com.

Teaching Tolerance

The illustrated text *Us and Them: A History of Intolerance in America* chronicles 14 episodes of intolerance in United States history. $2.75 each for up to 9 copies, $2.25 each for 10-19 copies, $1.75 each for 20-99 copies, and $1.50 for 100 or more copies. Contact Teaching Tolerance, 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104. On the Web, go to www.splcenter.org.

Reading Posters

Breathe Eat Sleep Read is just one of a new set of richly illustrated posters from the Children's Book Council. $8 each plus $3.50 s&h. Contact the Children's Book Council, Attn: Order Dept., 568 Broadway, Suite 404, New York, NY 10012. For details, call 800/999-2160.

Women in Math and Science

Angles, Chips, Test Tubes: Your Stepping Stones to the Future is a video that profiles women who've made their mark in predominantly male domains such as science, engineering, and medicine—and encourages young girls to do the same. $10 includes s&h. Contact the Thousand Oaks AAUW, P.O. Box 4223, Thousand Oaks, CA 91359-1223. E-mail: pamorg@pacbell.net.

HIV Education

Youths Living with HIV: Self-Evident Truths by G. Cajetan Luna tells the powerful stories of young people who are HIV positive. $14.95 plus $3 s&h for the first book, $1.25 s&h for each additional book. Contact Harrington Park Press, 10 Alice St., Binghamton, NY 13904, 800/342-9678, www.haworth.com.

Economics

The Federal Reserve System: Catalog of Public Information Materials 1995-1997 lists publications and audiovisual materials—most of them free—designed to increase public understanding of the Federal Reserve System, monetary policy, financial markets, and the economy. Contact the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, Publications Services, MS-127, Washington, DC 20551, 202/452-3244.

Stamp Collectors

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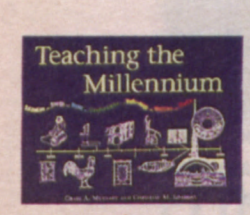
azine and catalog from the United Stampers of America club and the U.S. Postal Service. For a copy of *Stampers Cool-Lectibles*, write to Stampers Cool-Lectibles, Philatelic Fulfillment Service Center, United States Postal Service, P.O. Box 419636, Kansas City, MO 64179-0996, or call 888/782-6738.



Millennium Education
Help your students leap into the future with the help of *Teaching the Millennium*, a new book by Craig Munsart and Christine Izmirian. $17.95 plus $4 s&h from Fulcrum Publishing, 350 Indiana St., Suite 350, Golden, CO 80401-5093, 800/992-2908.

Geography
Widen your students' horizons with *Geography Wizardry for Kids*, a collection of projects, maps, games, crafts, and experiments for young explorers. $14.95 plus $4.95 s&h from Barron's Educational Services, Inc., 250 Wireless Blvd., Hauppage, NY 11788, 800/645-3476.

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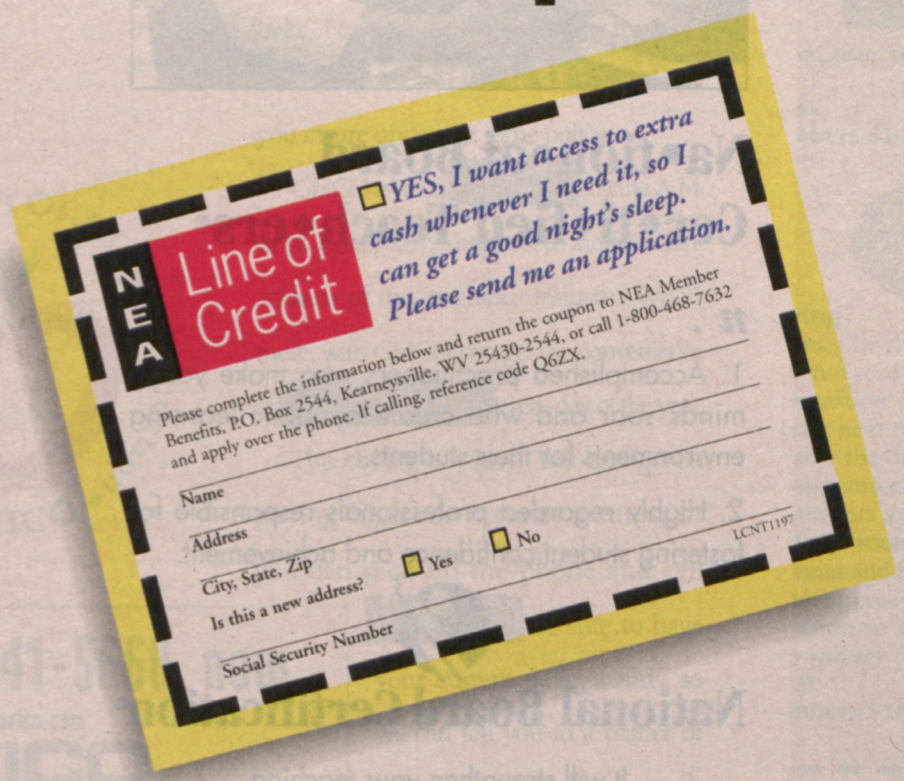
Artist Images
How do artists see themselves? Harriet Rohmer gathered 14 children's book illustrators and asked them to draw themselves. The resulting portraits—collected in *Just Like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists*—are as colorful and diverse as the artists themselves. $15.95 plus $3.75 s&h ($1 s&h for each additional copy) from Children's Book Press, 246 First St., Suite 101, San Francisco, CA 94105. E-mail: cbookpress@igc.org.

Science Fairs
Need science fair ideas? Check out *Science Fair Projects: Flight, Space & Astronomy* by Bob Bonnet and Dan Keen. It lists over 50 projects for students, parents, and teachers. $16.95 plus $3 s&h from Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 387 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016, 800/367-9692.

Food Science
The Institute of Food Technologists offers educators a free series of food science classroom experiments. For details, write to the IFT Society for Food Science and Technology, 221 N. LaSalle St., Suite 300, Chicago, IL 60601. On the Web, go to www.ift.org.

Prescription for a good night's sleep.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Heads Up

Grants & Fellowships

Toyota Tapestry Grants

Each year, Toyota and the National Science Teachers Association award 40 grants of up to $10,000 each to fund innovative science education projects. Deadline: January 21, 1998. Contact Tapestry, National Science Teachers Association, 1840 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201-3000 or send E-mail to ecrossley@nsta.org.

Holocaust Fellowship

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum announces its third year of the Mandel Teacher Fellowship Program. Up to 25 educators who teach grades 8-12 will be chosen to attend a five-day, all-expense-paid summer institute in Washington, D.C. in August of 1998.

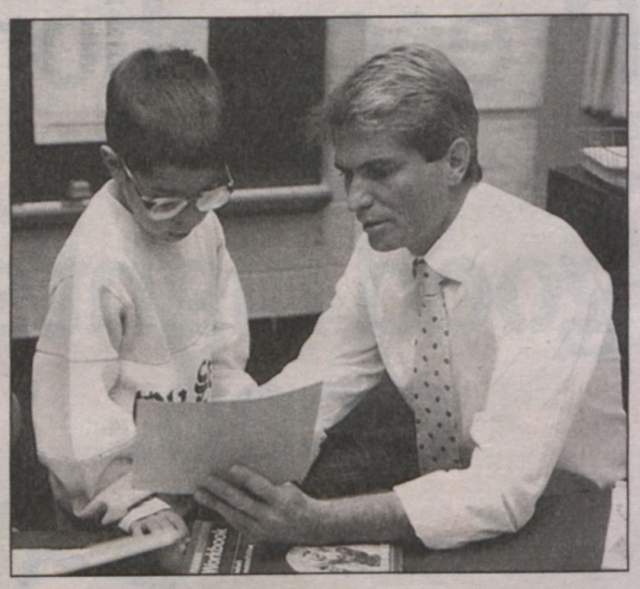
Deadline: February 14. For information, contact Stephen Feinberg, coordinator, Mandel Teacher Fellowship Program, Education Department, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Pl., S.W., Washington, DC 20024-2150, or send E-mail to sfeinberg@ushmm.org.

Math and Science

Applications for the 1998 Growth Initiatives for Teachers (GIFT) grant program, sponsored by the GTE Foundation, are now available. The Foundation awards $12,000 grants to 60 teams of one secondary math teacher and one secondary science teacher from the same school who plan to integrate their subjects by using technology in an innovative way. Deadline: January 16. Call 800/315-5010.

Technology

The Compaq Computer Corporation and Scholastic have launched a grants program offering up to $25,000 to school teams with promising technology-related staff development programs. Winners will be profiled in *Electronic Learning* magazine. Deadline for entries: December 1. For more information and an entry form, go to www.compaq.com/education.



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The NEA can provide financial support for members seeking National Board Certification. For information about the NEA loan program call 1-888-4-NEA-HELP

Web Winners

Great Globe Gallery

If you want to see the world from different points of view, take a look at this Web site. It features a variety of global images, including medieval renditions, those tracking weather patterns, and much more. Check it out at http://hum.amu.edu.pl/~zbzw/glob/glob0.htm.

Science Lab

Here's a site from Down Under with lots of science news, features, and interactive exhibits. The site is called Questacon: The National Science and Technology Centre, Canberra, Australia. The location: http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/Questacon/.

Environmental Education

The Environmental Education Net-

Heads Up

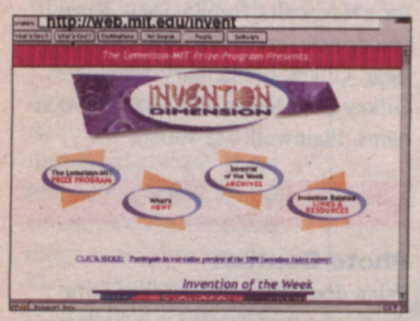
work is working to bring environmental education online and into a multimedia format. There's a special section for K-12 teachers and students. Go to www.envirolink.org/enviroed.

Mythic Cultures

Interested in Celtic culture or gothic tales? Enter the world of Earthlore Explorations, a colorful site featuring folktales, legends, and more. Take a look at www.elore.com.

Invention Dimension

Everything you've ever wanted to know about inventions and inventors can be found at this site, courtesy of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Plenty of links to other invention resources, too. Take a look at http://web.mit.edu/invent.



Windows on the Universe

Here's a site filled with features about the planets, the universe, and galaxies beyond. Call it up at www.windows.umich.edu.

KidLink

If your students are interested in connecting with students from around the world, they can use the KidLink network. Students can even choose their language of communication, from Deutsch to Norsk to Nepalese. Take a look at www.kidlink.org.

Whales

If you're teaching a unit about whales, here's a site with lesson plans and interactive information. Check it out at http://curry.edschool.Virginia.EDU/go/Whales/.

Awards/Scholarships

Teaching Excellence

Connecticut special ed teacher Eva Johnson and California high school teacher Patricia Oyeshiku were regional recipients of the National Council of Negro Women Excellence in Teaching Awards. Johnson is a special ed teacher at Alice Peck School in Hamden, Connecticut. Oyeshiku teaches English at Samuel F.B. Morse High School in San Diego. The awards are given to outstanding educators who make significant contributions to the education of African-American children.

Science Scholarships

Duracell and the National Science Teachers Association have expanded their scholarship competition. Now student teams in grades 7-8 and 10-12 can enter battery-operated inventions that are practical or entertaining. The top team in each category will win a $20,000 savings bond. Nearly 50 second, third, fourth, and fifth place winners will also win bonds. Deadline: January 14. For details, call 888/255-4242. Go to www.nsta.org/programs/duracell.shtml or www.duracell.com/Science/science.html.

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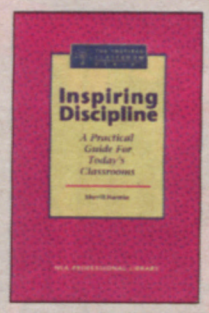
This series inspires today's practitioners and tomorrow's teachers with the methods, techniques, and confidence they need to create high-quality schools where all children can experience the joy of learning. After reading only a few pages from any one of these titles, you will be able to test out easy-to-follow strategies to improve teaching and learning in your classroom. If not, we will refund your money. Period.



Put this on your reading list today!

Today's classrooms require a confident mastery of modern classroom management theory and research — tested in everyday practice. **Inspiring Discipline** gives you lots of easy-to-implement ideas to expand your repertoire of self-discipline and personal responsibility. *Whatever your experience level, this practical resource will help you take control of your classroom today!*
128 pp., 1995, Stock #2950-X-00-D,
Non-members $12.95, **NEA Members $10.95**

NEW!

The quest for quality in every school is unique. **Inspiring Quality in Your School** shows you how to eliminate coercion, focus on quality, and institute an effective system of self-evaluation in your school. The author also provides practical guidance on common issues of school quality such as homework, tests, grades, retention in grade, ability grouping, team teaching, and discipline.
176 pp., 1997, Stock #2951-8-00-D,
Non-members $16.95, **NEA Members $14.95**

AVAILABLE 12/97

If you don't have time to read a stress management book, **Inspiring Tranquility** may be the book for you. This is a "fun read" — full of practical information — that takes important new research findings on how the brain works and offers quick and easy strategies to help teachers and students initiate the "relaxation response" in stressful classroom situations. Combining stress management and learning styles, this book presents a unique approach to teaching in an inclusive setting. *We guarantee a calmer classroom environment or your money back!*
112 pp., 1997, Stock #2592-6-00-D,
Non-members $12.95, **NEA Members $10.95**

Look for these new titles in the series coming in 1998!

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Heads Up

Member Exchange

Puerto Rico Road Maps

My ninth graders want to send Puerto Rico road maps to other students or teachers in the United States. Write to: Victor Quinones, P.O. Box 11, Guanica, Puerto Rico 00653.

Acts of Kindness

This year, my fifth graders were troubled by increased incidences of violence involving children. Their desire "to do something" led to the coordination of the Random Acts of Kindness Kids Club and pen pal exchange. In the past few months we've processed more than 300 requests for pen pals from numerous states. Teachers interested in this pen pal exchange may send their students' requests—complete with names, addresses, and grade level—to Connie McFarland, Random Acts of Kindness Kids Club, Glacier Gateway School, P.O. Box 2596, Columbia Falls, MT 59912.

Traveling Teddy Bear

Interested in a guest or traveling companion? Gilkey Bear, born at NASA's Lewis Research Center and adopted by Joan Whitney from Plainwell, Michigan, is ready to travel.

Whitney's fourth graders will calculate the miles the bear has traveled, learn history and geography, and view the world through photographs, video, and postcards.

If you're interested in taking Gilkey for a ride, call 616/685-5664. Even if you're not, send a postcard to Gilkey Bear, Gilkey Elementary School, 96 Gilkey Bear Room 123, 707 S. Woodhams, Plainwell, MI 49080.

Contests

Photo Contest

What does freedom look like? Students who best capture it in a photo will be honored by the American Bar Association as part of its annual photo competition in celebration of Law Day, May 1, 1998. The competition is open to students age 12-18. Deadline: February 15. For more information, contact the American Bar Association, Law Day Project/15.3, 541 N. Fairbanks Ct., Suite 1500, Chicago, IL 60611-3314. Fax: 312/988-5032, E-mail: abapub@abanet.org.

Announcements

NEA UniServ Intern Program

As part of its ongoing commitment to state and local affiliates, NEA is seeking potential eligible candidates for the 1998 UniServ Intern Program for ethnic minorities and women. The UniServ interns will embark on a month-long training program and three-month field assignment. Interns who complete the program will be certified as eligible for UniServ staff work in an NEA state or local affiliate.

For details and an application, send a letter to Brenda Vincent, UniServ Intern Program, NEA Membership and Affiliates, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

All letters of interest must be received by December 12. Fax copies will not be accepted. Program application deadline: January 30. Note: NEA does not guarantee employment of UniServ Staff—employment is a state and local decision.

Guess Where You Can Find Great Ideas In Your E-mail!

"I found a great way to make lunch duty fun!"

"Here's how I've helped to improve my students' skills in writing and spelling."

"I'd like to share some ideas for getting to know new students quickly."

"As a bus driver, I've come up with a good way to gather student data for my records."

Works4Me, NEA's E-mail classroom tip of the week, provides a wealth of ideas and strategies—submitted, tested, and approved by the *real* education experts: your colleagues.

Interested? It's Easy!

There are two ways to find these practical classroom tips. Visit our new online tips archive at http://www.nea.org/helpfrom and follow the links to the Works4Me Tips Archive. Or you can become a **Works4Me** subscriber and get a tip automatically each week by E-mail. No more sitting in long meetings to get useful ideas. And it's all free!

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- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
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Works4Me is just one part of NEA's newest suite of products designed to help you work with students. To find out more, turn your web browser to http://helpfrom.nea.org

helpfrom.nea.org
Tips and Tools for Better Schools

Visit NEA's newest web area at http://helpfrom.nea.org

In the Light Lane

Amid Summer Night's Stream

After completing a lesson on library procedure that included distinguishing fiction from nonfiction, I assigned my fifth grade students their first book report of the year. They were to report on any nonfiction hero of their choice.

As the class filtered through the school library in search of books on their heroes, I noticed Jared, a freckle-faced redhead, frantically perusing the card catalog.

A few minutes later, he dejectedly shuffled over to me lamenting, "Mr. Chaney, I can't find any books on my hero, Superman."

I was just about to inform Jared that Superman was a fictitious character. But then his classmate Angie blurted out haughtily, "Of course you can't find anything on Superman, silly. That's a fiction name. You need to look under Clark Kent."

Jerome 'Jody' Chaney
Pittsburg, California

A first grader came into my art room one day and noticed the poster of the painting *The Starry Night* by Vincent Van Gogh.

"Wow," he said. "Who made that picture?"

"Vincent Van Gogh," I replied.

He looked at it thoughtfully for a few minutes and said, "That's really good. He must be in the *second* grade."

Diane Balsley
Oak Creek, Wisconsin

I thought my tenth grade special education global studies class had a good grasp on the presented material—until a glossary test on the rise of czarist Russia revealed the following answers:

- serf: on big waves
- feudalism: I knock you out
- Russification: Russian knock
- Romanov Dynasty: eat dinner at Romanov's

Fortunately, these test answers were an exception, and the rest of the students in the class did indeed understand the lesson.

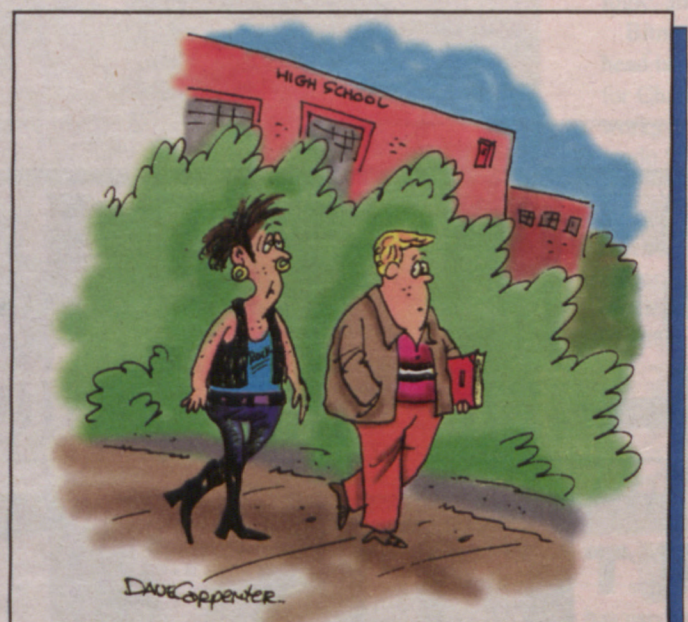
Lynn Stankowitz
North Babylon, New York

Near the end of an exhausting day of teaching art classes, I suggested to one of the fourth grade boys that he bring in some items from home for his sculpture. He said that he couldn't do that because his mom worked and there wouldn't be time to gather such things.

Because I was tired and also had young children at home, I sympathized and said, "I know how your mom feels."

He glanced up at me and said, "Oh! Do you work somewhere?"

Jan Smolik
Alma, Nebraska



"I can't get into school ever since they installed the metal detector."

On her first day of preschool, Sierra approached the dramatic play corner of the classroom and cautiously opened the pretend refrigerator. She drew out what I would have labeled a hot dog, looked up to me smiling, and proclaimed, "Look, a tofu pup!"

Cathleen Banister-Marx
Sedona, Arizona

After giving what I believed to be an excellent demonstration of radioactivity, I gave my students a test with the question "What is radioactive decay?"

I was amused by one student, who wrote, "The stuff the dentist scrapes off my teeth."

John Penn
Rifle, Colorado

My third grade class was studying about the Pilgrims. I asked the students to list reasons why the Pilgrims sailed across the ocean on the *Mayflower*. One little girl wrote, "They wanted to wash up freely."

Timmie Spangler
Depew, Oklahoma

When my basic ninth grade language arts class was studying Shakespearean theater, I explained what a prolific playwright "The Bard" was. I indicated that Shakespeare had written 37 plays, and I listed and briefly described five or six of them.

On a review quiz the next day, I asked the students to list a few of Shakespeare's plays. One student answered, "Amid Summer Night's Stream"—a new title I thought was rather poetic!

Carolyn Garner
Lawrenceville, Georgia

I'm a pre-K teacher aide, and during circle time I was showing students pictures of all sorts of animals. As I held the pictures up, the children would call out what the animal was—a monkey, a bear, an elephant, etc.

When I came to a picture of a seal, I held it up and said, "Oh boy, that's a tuffy."

To which the whole class replied, "IT'S A TUFFY!"

Roberta Sclafani
Hollywood, Florida

I had just arrived to the first grade room to teach art when a little girl raised her hand. When I called on her, she said, "My cat just had kittens. Do you know why?"

"No," I said. "Why?"

She came up to me and whispered, "Because she has a husband."

Jeanne LaPlante
Merrillan, Wisconsin

Want more school-day smiles? Check out Plants, Animals, and Humid Beans, *a book based on "In the Light Lane" from the NEA Professional Library. $6.95 for NEA members. To order, call 800/229-4200 and use stock #1880-X-00-F.*

It Adds Up

I was doing individual achievement testing with one of our more "streetwise" students when he hesitated on a three-place multiplication problem. Encouraged to give it a try, he proceeded by quietly vocalizing each step involved. "Let's see, three times seven is 21 . . . put down the one and carry the deuce."

Don Boucher
Appleton, Wisconsin

My fifth graders were working at the chalkboard to find the perimeters of rectangles with only one length and one width marked. Seeing that one young lady was having difficulty, I went over to help. She'd added only the two sides that were marked.

I suggested that if the rectangle were a fence, her dog would be gone. She stared at the drawing and began thinking very hard. I asked what she was thinking, so I could lead her in the right direction.

She replied, "I'm trying to figure out how to get my dog back."

Nina Garofalo
St. Louis, Missouri

During our Math Night celebration last year, part of our preparation included learning a math song that related the many ways math is part of our daily lives. I asked my students to draw a picture illustrating something—*anything*—to do with math.

Second grader Samantha turned in a portrait of an alien. When I asked her to describe how math was involved, she proudly pointed to the alien and said, "See? He has *24* eyes!"

Ellynne Brice Davis
Leonardtown, Maryland

Got Laughs?

Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, fax 202/822-7206, E-mail NEAToday@nea.org

Or you can post your contribution—and read more stories—on *NEA Today*'s Web site. Just point your Web browser to **www.nea.org/neatoday** and click on "In the Light Lane."

People

Season of **Smiles**

For **John Duncan**, the joy of giving blossomed while he was decked out as one of society's greatest gift givers.

"I was playing Santa Claus at one of the schools," recalls Duncan, a bus driver in Lawton, Oklahoma. "One little girl wanted a playhouse for Christmas—and that's when I came up with an idea."

From that little conversation, Duncan was inspired to construct intricate wooden dollhouses for children throughout his community during the holiday season.

Duncan's actually the closest thing to Santa Claus for some of the children—but he's modest about his accomplishment.

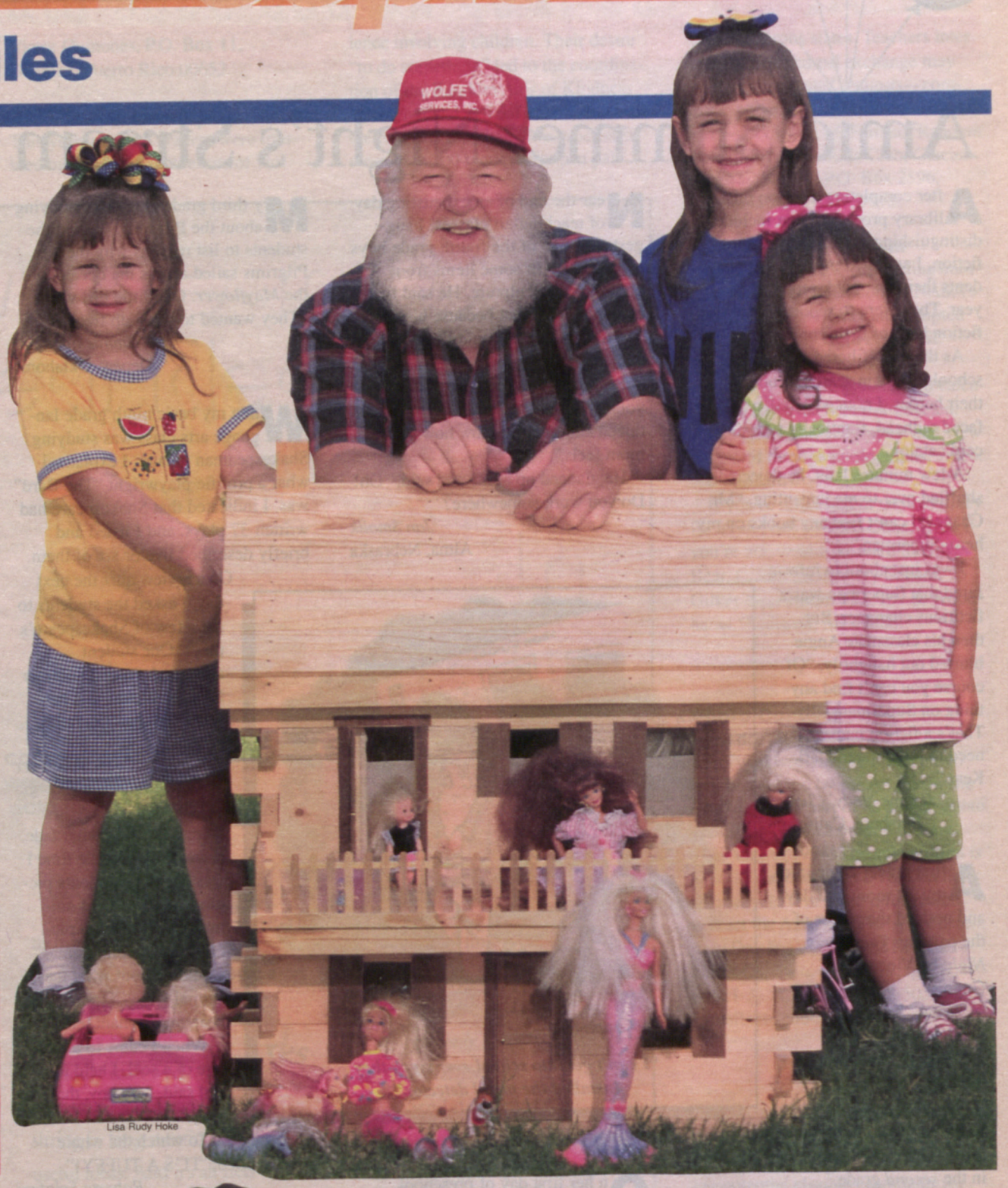
"Anyone could go down to the lumber yard and, with a minimal number of tools, build a dollhouse," Duncan says. "All it takes is a hammer, a small saw, and a drill."

This year, Duncan will give away three dollhouses. Every house, which takes him about 12 hours to complete, stands three-and-a-half-feet high. Each one boasts details that include finished doors and windows, a porch, and a balcony.

"A lot of them look rustic, like a log cabin should," Duncan says.

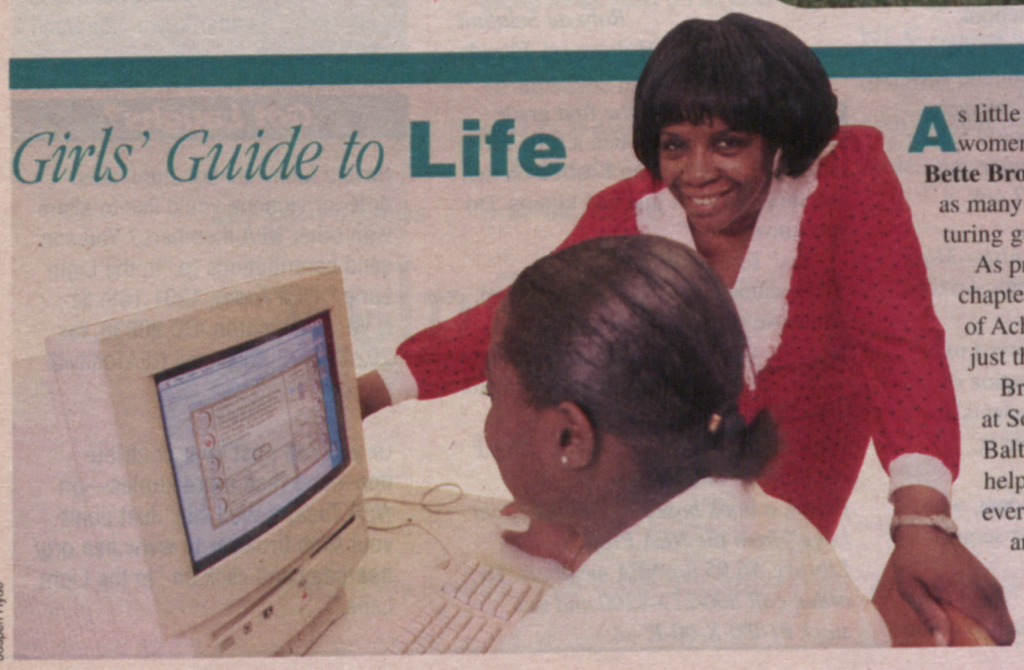
Duncan delivers the completed houses to the lucky new owners, who have the honor of decorating, furnishing, and painting the homes as they wish.

"It's just a gift to make these kids happy," Duncan says. "I'll keep giving them away probably as long as I play Santa Claus."



Lisa Rudy Hoke

Girls' Guide to **Life**



Joseph Hyde

As little girls grow into young women in the Baltimore area, **Bette Brooks** wants to ensure that as many as possible have a nurturing guide for their journey.

As president of the Baltimore chapter of the National Women of Achievement, Brooks does just that.

Brooks, a school secretary at Southwest Academy in Baltimore County, works to help young women master everything from etiquette to articulation—the elements of what she calls "life education."

Brooks describes her charges as "a dynamic youth group" of young women who "are learning basic lessons in character."

Students benefit from mentoring programs, cultural field trips, and tutoring.

"We always have the girls doing some kind of public service," Brooks notes. "And we also teach them how to help each other."

The community welcomes the support that Brooks and her organization bring.

"I had a parent tell me her daughter was so shy before she got involved in the program," Brooks recalls. "She thanked us for helping her meet the right people."

Dream Come **True**

Jay Fleiter

It was, appropriately enough, like a scene out of a movie for **Brian Marvis** when his screenplay "Dream True" won grand prize honors at a national screenplay competition.

"It was completely unexpected," says Marvis, thinking back to the winning moment last March. "I got to kiss my wife, run down there, and get my award."

The script was selected from among 800 entries. Marvis, a language arts and social studies teacher at Nestucca Valley Middle School in Oregon, won $2,500 and a trip to Hollywood.

Marvis describes "Dream True," which he wrote eight years ago, as a fantasy-romance in which two young children meet and are reunited at a fictional place called Pollywog Pond.

"Everyone has their own Pollywog Pond," Marvis says. "It has to do with that imperishable piece of childhood in all of us."

Marvis has met with one producer interested in his script.

"I long for the day when it will be up on the big screen," says Marvis, who's been writing screenplays since 1985. He's now working on his eighth screenplay, whose main character is . . . a teacher.

Down to the **Bare Bones**

Nita Bitner likes tough puzzles—but jigsaws aren't her thing.

Bitner pieces together bones to re-create human faces and skulls. For 12 years, she's worked alongside Dr. Michael Charney, a world-renowned expert in facial reconstruction and forensic anthropology, painstakingly solving mysteries of human identification.

"Each case is brand new," says Bitner, a science and social studies teacher at Ball Middle School in Loveland, Colorado. "You can't just follow a set formula. It requires a great deal of thought, logic, and questioning."

Bitner serves as head lab assistant for Charney, who works at Colorado State University. The pair has solved 13 cases and was recently featured on the Discovery Channel series *The New Detectives*.

Charles Fellenbaum

The series highlighted their success solving a missing person case that stumped St. Louis detectives for years. Their work led to the conviction of a man who murdered his wife.

"We come up with the person's whole profile, including their sex, height, weight, and racial background. Then we play dot-to-dot on the face and fill in the spaces, putting in facial features, including eyes, nose, mouth, and ears," Bitner explains.

It takes about a week to re-create a cast of a person's skull and approximate what he or she looked like.

Bitner understands the appeal of her work to her students—and brings in "specimens" as part of her science curriculum.

"There's nothing more exciting to kids than dead people," she says. "This is fun stuff."

Hot News in **Nursing**

To spread the word on hot topics in school nursing, **Elizabeth Mattey** has used her 11 years of experience at Mt. Pleasant Elementary in Wilmington, Delaware, to pen two articles for professional journals.

Last December, *Pediatric Nursing* published Mattey's article, "Teach Us Body Sense," titled after a health education program she developed.

"As a school nurse, I could teach for a half hour—in one-time hits, not continuously. So I developed a program to teach health across the curriculum," Mattey explains.

Gary Enelgh

"For a lesson on the body, children read and discuss the different body parts," she notes. "Then I have them do an art project on the body."

This issue of *Pediatric Nursing* can be ordered on the Web at www.ajj.com/jpi/.

Mattey's second article, on the risk of transmitting hepatitis B from student to staff member, appeared in the *Journal of School Nursing* in February.

"There weren't any clear-cut guidelines about what to tell staff," she notes. "There's a vaccine to prevent the virus. But who should get it?"

Her heavily researched article notes, in part, that educators who have students with hepatitis B should consider the vaccine, and that school staff should be provided with updated information annually so they can make informed health decisions.

So is she now Elizabeth Mattey, writer?

"First and foremost, I am a nurse," Mattey replies. "Nurses need to educate the public about health issues—that's just part of our being."

Money

Financial Finds

Price Check
If you're considering buying anything from a new VCR to a new minivan, visit Compare Net on the Web at www.compare.net. The premise is simple: Before you spend hundreds—or thousands—of dollars, you ought to be able to compare offerings from different manufacturers that have exactly the options you want. Compare Net has built a database of more than 10,000 models of products in 41 different categories. Pick the product you're interested in, and the site provides you with a comprehensive menu of features. Check off the options you want, and the site then displays the name—and suggested retail price—of every model that meets your specifications.

Investment Clubs
If you'd like to join an investment club but can't find one with an opening, why not start one of your own? Guidelines for organizing and running an investment club are available from the National Association of Investors Corporation, Box 220, Royal Oak, MI 48068, 810/583-6242. This group also posts information on its Web site at www.better-investing.org.

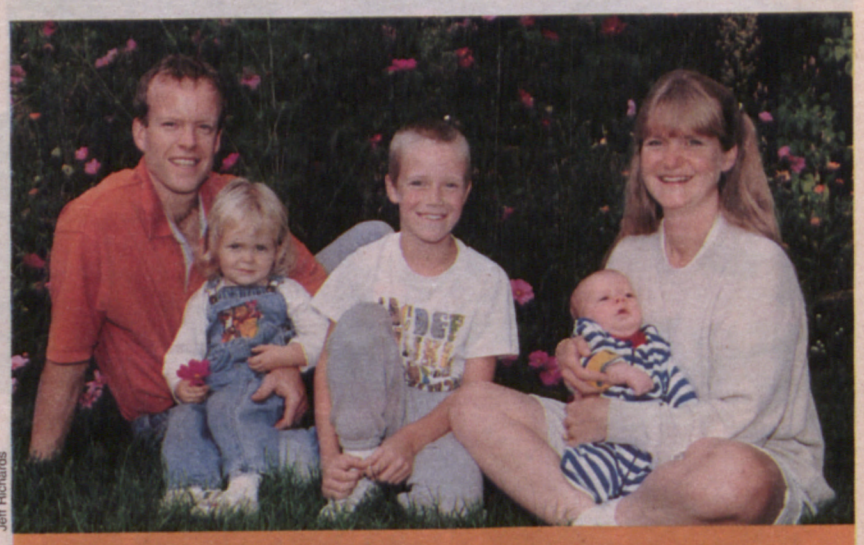
Investing on Your Own
If you don't have time for an investment club but are nervous about investing on your own, consider joining the American Association of Individual Investors. For a $49 annual fee, members swap information at regular meetings and receive a monthly journal on investment strategies. AAII's Web site, www.aaii.com, features a helpful investing bulletin board. Call 800/428-2244 for details.

Advice from the Ladies
Looking for sound, in-depth investment advice? Check out *The Beardstown Ladies' Common-Sense Investment Guide* (Hyperion, $10.95, paper), a best-selling book about how 15 women, ranging in age from 52 to 90, taught themselves to pick winning stocks. It's a good read—plus it provides information on what you're getting into if you're thinking about starting or joining an investment club. Another solid book on investing to consider is Michael Sivy's *Rules of Investing: How to Pick Stocks Like a Pro* (Warner, $24.95).

Decisions, Decisions

What Good Is Life Insurance?

Do you need it? If so, how much should you buy?



Jeff Richards

New York special ed teacher John Cain, the father of three young children, quickly realized the need for term life insurance when he became a parent.

Like most people, NEA member John Cain, a 32-year-old special education teacher at Corning West High School in New York, didn't have life insurance until he became a parent.

"Before that, I really didn't need insurance," says Cain, who resides in Elmira with his wife and three children, ages nine, two, and two months. "But at this point in my life, I have to think about what would happen to my family if I passed away."

Cain shopped around and eventually purchased a term policy, the most basic type of coverage. "The rates on term insurance were more affordable than they were for other types of coverage," he notes.

Cain bought a no-load, decreasing-term life insurance policy through NEA Member Benefits, whose life insurance program features several types of policies for active and retired members. "The policy more than meets our needs and fits pretty easily into our budget," he points out.

Without realizing it, Cain followed one of the basic rules regarding life insurance: If you have kids or other financial dependents, you need it. If you don't have dependents, you probably don't need it.

Cain also followed a second rule of thumb: Buy the simplest, lowest cost life insurance policy available.

How much coverage should you buy?

The answer depends to a large extent on your age, whether you have children, what your spouse earns, and how much money you've saved.

The National Insurance Consumer Organization (NICO) recommends seven times income, for a family with two or more small children. That amount includes any group coverage you get at work. When only one parent works, that person should carry all the coverage, NICO advises. When both parents work, the coverage should be split proportionately.

Chances are, term insurance can meet most of your basic insurance needs. Term insurance protects you for a specific number of years (a term)—typically one to 20. When the term runs out, you can usually renew the policy. If you die, the insurance company will pay out a specified amount of money to your beneficiaries.

When you're young, the premium for term coverage is very low. (For a death benefit of $100,000, a 25-year-old nonsmoker might pay out about $150 a year.) With most policies, the premium increases slightly each year.

Term coverage gives you the most coverage for your money when you're young. But don't be surprised if agents discourage you from purchasing it—the commissions on such policies are much lower than the commissions on other types of insurance.

Most agents will urge you to buy a cash value policy instead. With this plan, you pay a comparably large premium, and most of the extra money goes into a kind of savings account, which builds up tax-deferred.

Not all term life insurance policies are equal. When shopping for term insurance:

- *Make it renewable.* The policy should be renewable automatically, regardless of your health. For most term insurance, renewal comes annually.
- *Make it convertible.* Your term policy should be convertible into cash value coverage, at standard rates and without a health exam, right up to age 65, thereby giving you the opportunity to continue your coverage into old age, even if your health deteriorates.
- *Make it a nonsmoker policy.* Nonsmokers live longer than smokers and pay as much as 10 to 20 percent less for life insurance.
- *Look for guaranteed premiums.* Some policies guarantee your premiums for up to 10 years or so. Many companies that have the option to raise your premiums may not do so, but it's a risk. If two policies are priced about the same but one guarantees low premiums for many more years, buy it.
- *Ask for preferred rates.* Some term insurance companies now have six or eight different risk classes with stricter underwriting criteria at each level. Savings can be as great as 35 percent.

Resources

One of the best ways to find cheap term insurance is to ask a computerized price-quote service to find it for you. Several will scan their multicompany databases free of charge and mail you a list of some of the least expensive policies. Some options: Wholesale Insurance Network (800/808-5810), Quotesmith (800/556-9393), Selectquote (800/343-1985), and Termquote (800/444-8376).

Consider the policies available through NEA Member Benefits, which include the NEA Term Life Insurance Plan, the NEA Guaranteed Issue Life Plan for NEA-Retired members age 55 and over, and the NEA Level Premium Term Life Insurance Plan. For more information, call Member Benefits toll-free at 800/637-4636.

Eye on Retirement

In a Budget Lies Future Success

Everything you trim and save from your budget today will make your future that much richer.

Ever turn on *Wall Street Week* or CNBC and hear a guest talk about drawing up a budget, buying disability insurance, or writing a will?

Probably not. Investing is the glamorous side of personal finance. If we just manage to pick the right investment, it seems, everything else will fall neatly into place.

It doesn't work that way, though. The real money horror stories are not about people who forgot to invest, but about those who failed to set aside enough money for their needs or forgot to protect their assets.

Investing is critical if you're to achieve the life you want. But before you can invest, you've got to build a base—and you've got to protect what you have. To do that, you need to work out a budget.

Successful budgeting is the engine of growth for your personal financial machine. Unless you have a handle on what comes in and where it goes, you'll never be able to move on to building your net worth.

For many Americans, budgeting is tedium. They see it as both chore and punishment. But budgeting should involve more than just listing your utility and grocery bills and thinking about where you can cut back.

There are two secrets to successful budgeting. First, build your dreams into your budget. When you set up your budget, include savings for college, a special vacation, a new home, a retirement business, a home renovation plan—whatever you dream about—under discretionary spending.

Second, think hard about your definition of necessities. Necessities have a way of expanding to meet, or exceed, your income.

So when you think about where to cut back, look beyond your discretionary spending (meals out, travel) to what you consider necessities. That includes groceries, clothing, transportation, insurance, haircuts, dry cleaning, housing, furniture.

Reaching financial goals means living beneath your means. It's that simple.

"People who don't get into the habit of living beneath their means will never achieve their goals," says Jonathan Pond, the Boston financial planner who appears regularly on public television's *Nightly Business Report*.

When you set up your budget, take a look at your fixed expenses. It is this amount that you need to cover for three months in a reserve fund. Then look at your budget with an eye toward the future.

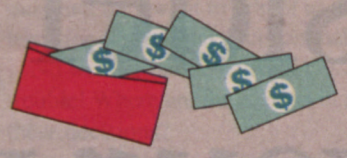
Think of budgeting as "trade-off spending." If you don't spend it today, you may have it tomorrow for a new home, a vacation, or setting up your own business.

—Mary Rowland

Worksheet

Budget Review

What's in your budget? What items can go? Figure out how much you spend on the categories below. From there, see where you can shave or juggle to budget for bigger goals—like a comfortable retirement.



Monthly Expenses	Discretionary Expenses
Housing and maintenance costs	College fund
Car payment	Vacation fund
Groceries	Dream fund (or you-name-it fund)
Bus, train, or subway fare	Meals out and entertaining
Child care/tuition	Babysitters
Life insurance	Cab fare and rental cars
Disability insurance	Housecleaning help
Health insurance	Facials, manicure, massage
Auto insurance	Clothing and jewelry
Credit card payments	Health club/sports equipment
Student loan payments	Charitable contributions
Personal care (haircuts, dry cleaning)	Gifts

Coming to Terms.

A budget is a major part of the foundation for your personal financial plan. To pull together an effective budget, it helps to know where you stand financially. A **balance sheet** can help you do just that—determine your net worth.

A balance sheet shows what you own and what you owe. To create one, list assets (what you have) and liabilities (what you owe). Assign a dollar amount to every item in both categories.

What goes into a balance sheet?

■ **Liquid assets** are those with an indisputable cash value that can be easily converted to cash. They include a bank checking account, savings account, and mutual fund money market account.

■ **Personal assets** are those items you've purchased—such as clothing, furnishings, electronics—that have some durability.

Although they last longer than a meal out, these assets may not retain their value. Many financial professionals refer to these as "wasting assets," because as soon as you purchase them, they begin to decrease in value.

These assets belong in your records, though, because they show the choices you have made in spending your money. Included in personal assets are a residence, vacation home, automobiles, and computer equipment, all of which may be significant investments.

■ **Investment assets** include stocks, bonds, and mutual funds, whether they are invested in a retirement account like a 401(k) or 403(b) retirement plan, an individual retirement account, or a taxable account. Assets also include investment real estate, collectibles, and precious metals.

■ **Liabilities** are what you owe. These include credit card debt and car loans, as well as long-term debt like a mortgage loan.

■ **Net worth**, which is the difference between what you own and what you owe, is a measure of your wealth. One of the basic goals of financial planning is to increase your net worth. You can do that by saving more money, by getting a better return on those assets you already have, or by paying off debt.

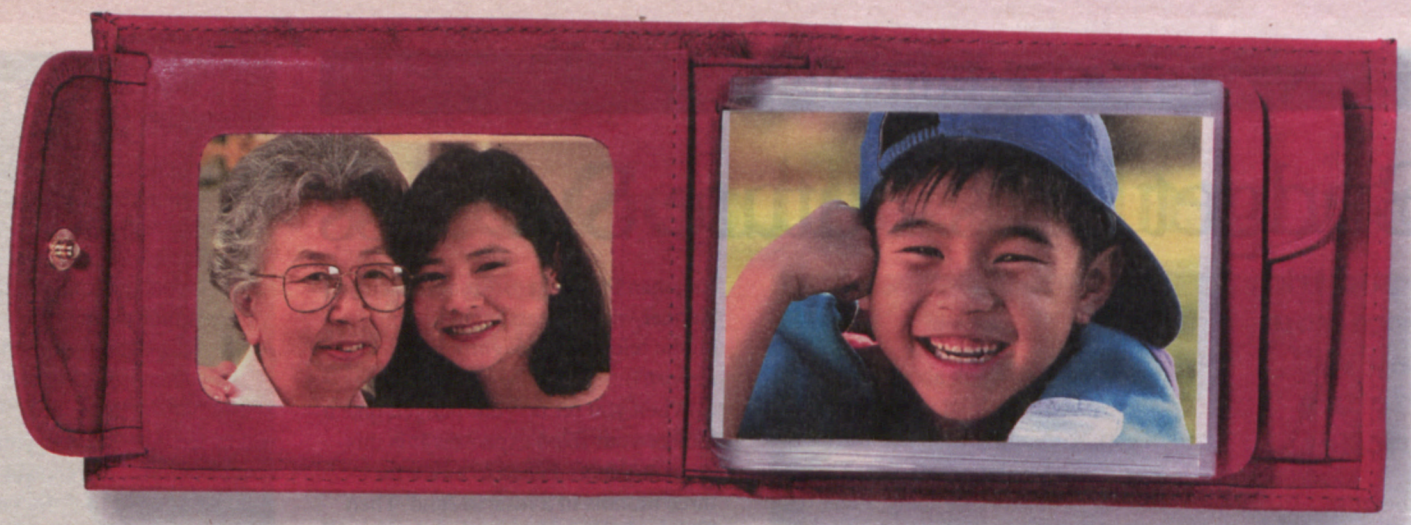
Educated Investor

Q. I am trying to save for my children's college education. Does the new education individual retirement account (IRA) make sense?

A. In most cases, yes. This is an appealing and flexible tool for college saving. The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 permits a maximum annual $500 contribution to a separate education IRA for each child. The money contributed to these IRAs is not deductible for tax purposes. But the money grows in the IRA without a bite for taxes.

Contributions are phased out for single taxpayers beginning at an adjusted gross income of $95,000 and eliminated at $110,000. For joint filers, they start phasing out at $150,000 and are eliminated at $160,000.

Before the beneficiary of this education IRA reaches the age of 30, the funds should be used for college costs or rolled over to a younger sibling. If not, they are distributed to the beneficiary, and taxes plus a 10 percent penalty will be applied. The 10 percent penalty also applies to money taken out of this fund that is not used for college expenses.



When you're considering insurance, consider what's in your wallet.

Protect your entire family, without taking a lot out of your wallet, with affordable NEA insurance coverage.

Check off the plans that you'd like more information on and return this coupon today.

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*Life members must be actively employed in the field of education

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My Turn

'Hold Us to Higher Standards'

If teachers are held to higher standards, an Indiana educator says, everything else will fall into place.

By Damon Moore

My first year on the job was proof that I knew a lot about teaching—but very little about teaching students.

It was 1970. The length of students' hair or skirts took precedence over their achievements, and the budget crunch took precedence over everything.

My 35 students quickly became 40. There were no new books—and not enough old ones. I ran out of paper and pencils in February. Staff was cut, and assignments were doubled up.

The district, for its part, trembled under the weight of bureaucratic wheeling and dealing, refusing to admit that the emperor had no clothes, and that our kids were in trouble.

Each day, I had to close the door to the excuses, insane politics, and educationally bankrupt decisions of those who had no ownership in my classroom.

Each day, I had to work to raise expectations, respect each student, and build an environment where it was okay to question and discover.

My first students, bless their souls, taught me how to teach. They learned not *because* of systems, but *in spite of* them. And I learned that my classroom was a place where I alone held the keys to the magic of learning.

Today's first-year teachers shouldn't have to go through what I—and so many others—went through. And today's kids shouldn't have to teach their teachers or themselves.

My experience as a teacher for 27 years and an Association activist tells me that teachers want to be held to higher standards.

In recent years, I've served as a member of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Last year, the Commission released a report, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*.

By the year 2006, the report says, all students in America should have access to competent, caring, qualified teaching in schools organized for success. It goes on to explain in great detail how to reach that goal.

You'd be right to be skeptical of yet another report loaded with possible solutions to the many problems that face our schools.

But you'd be wrong to dismiss this report as more rhetoric. This report is different because it's based on the belief that *teachers* can and must lead the movement to reform America's public schools.

No matter how often politicians and state boards of education demand better results, the stark reality is that there will be no real change until the worker—the professional practitioner in the classroom—is granted a greater role in the goal-setting process, from the building level to the national level.

A hospital board of trustees doesn't tell a surgeon which scalpel should be used or where to make the cut.

But, in education, lay people decide which books to use, what the curriculum will cover, the size of the class, the length of the school day and year, the grading system, the entrance and exit standards, and the criteria for student success or failure.

For the most part, these are well-intentioned people who can claim only that they went to school as their basis for educational decision making.

No wonder public education is in trouble! Where are the experts in all these decisions?

Legislators can't create reform. They can change the rules and withdraw funds, but that doesn't change anything. It only makes things harder.

Parents can't create reform. They have a vested interest in schools only as long as their children attend. When their kids graduate, they move on.

Administrators can't create reform. For too many of them, each job is merely a stepping stone to the job they *really* want.

Only the teachers remain. Reform's last chance rests in the hearts and minds of those who are fighting the battle up front—in the classroom.

As we enter the implementation stage of the education reform movement, the power is finally in our hands. Finally, it is our day in the sun.

Now it's up to us to create a public education system that delivers an excellent education to all students, no matter where they live, what color their skin, or how much natural ability they bring into the classroom.

Damon Moore is a science teacher at Dennis Middle School in Richmond, Indiana. He can be reached at DPMoore@prodigy.com. For more on What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future, *go to www.tc.columbia.edu/~teachcomm/what.htm.*

Steve Koger

NEA member Damon Moore served on the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

You Said It

Bill Fischer, editor

This month, I'd like to answer some frequently asked questions about *NEA Today*.

Is *NEA Today* printed on recycled paper?

NEA Today is printed on paper that can be recycled again and used in other paper products.

Why the glossy paper. Wouldn't newsprint cost less?

Not really, because *NEA Today*'s circulation is so large that it can be run on rotogravure presses, at a very economical price. But this type of printing does require glossier paper than most newspapers use.

Where's *NEA Today* printed and how does it get to me?

NEA Today is printed in Illinois, just east of St. Louis. Copies are trucked to a nearby post office and then on to bulk mail centers.

Because Illinois is in the middle of the country, copies of *NEA Today* are shipped to their farthest delivery points—to the West and East coasts first, then to NEA members in the rest of the nation.

I noticed that the "*NEA Today* Local Editor Advisory Board" is listed on page 2. Who are the people on this board?

They're a group of NEA members who edit high quality newsletters published by their local NEA affiliates.

These members represent diverse geographic areas and sizes of locals. Each month, these advisory panelists receive advance copies of *NEA Today* and are asked to evaluate how well the issue reflects the diverse issues of concern to NEA members.

Their responses help us improve what *NEA Today* delivers to you.

Does the new *NEA Today* Web site have same content as the print version?

The Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday contains many of the same articles—and a lot more.

It's a place to chat with experts, a forum to share ideas, and a place to grab information not found in the print version.

Have a look . . .

Bill Fischer

Meet

Attorney General Janet Reno makes time for the issue of school safety.

When Janet Reno speaks to school children, which she does often, she tells them what the attorney general does.

"I'm responsible for the FBI, the DEA, the Bureau of Prisons, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and most of the government lawyers," she says, "so there's a lot on my plate."

No one doubts that. Still Reno makes time for issues closer to her heart than to the headlines—issues like fighting hate crimes, reducing the juvenile crime rate, and encouraging educators to get conflict resolution training.

In light of an upcoming White House Conference on Hate Crimes—set for November 10—Reno spoke with NEA Today *Assistant Editor Stefanie Weiss in the majestic Justice Department conference room that once served as Robert Kennedy's office.*

Scott Suchman

Janet Reno

Advocate for Schoolyard Justice

Is school safety an issue for the attorney general of the United States?
Very much so. We have got to focus on violence against youth in our homes and in our schools. Otherwise, we can't possibly expect that young people will be safe in our communities.

Five years ago, you said that youth violence was the single greatest crime problem in America. Is that still true?
I think it is, in many respects, truer today than it was then. In the 1980s, youth crime and youth victimization rates went up, while the number of young people went down. At the beginning of the '90s, the number of young people aged 12-18 started going up, and it's expected to grow significantly in the next five to 10 years. Unless we get control of youth violence, it can become a much more difficult problem.

Have you had any success?
Yes. Over the past two years, violent juvenile crime has declined by 25 percent nationwide.

What's responsible for the drop in youth violence?
Communities are joining together with enforcement and prevention programs that are balanced and provide support for each child. And when everyone comes together in a community—with police working on law enforcement issues and the community working on prevention issues—you can be so much more effective. I think that's what people are realizing in communities across America. So there is hope, but we have much, much more work to do.

What can NEA members do?
When police and schools work together, you can create a very effective force against youth violence.

The school staff know the youngsters. They know who deserves a second chance. They know who has just blown any opportunity because they've taken advantage of people. Sometimes the police officer can suggest to the teacher things that might be done to keep the youngster on the right track.

Another thing: I feel very strongly that we must teach conflict resolution in our public schools. I think we can teach youngsters to resolve conflicts without knives and guns and fists—and I think it helps to improve their communication and problem-solving skills to boot.

My hope is that every teacher could have some courses in conflict resolution, and that every child in America could be taught, in the elementary grades, how to resolve conflicts.

What are you doing to make that happen?
I go to teacher training sessions, answer questions, encourage people, and really try to let teachers know how much I appreciate what they're doing.

And I go to as many schools that are developing conflict resolution programs as I can. I've seen that children often get in trouble because they can't communicate with each other, and I've seen that they have such a great sense of fairness if they are trained to talk it out.

How big a problem is hate crime in America today?
I think one hate crime in America is one crime too many.

I think that the spirit that motivates hate crimes is a learned spirit. Again, teachers have a chance to provide a foundation upon which that spirit is never learned, and, if it is learned from forces outside the school, teachers have a chance to help children unlearn it.

What else can educators do?
First, they can help children develop respect for each other—then it's harder for the seeds of hate to take hold.

Second, teachers can help children develop a regard and reverence for the differences that are so special among human beings. Teachers can reach out to youngsters who may feel a little different, who may not be excelling, and by word and deed and demonstration, they can show those children that they are somebody, that they have a capacity to learn.

And third, teachers can speak out against hate.

Do you think teaching tolerance is enough?
No. We've got to get behind the walls that sometimes separate us to appreciate each other. Tolerance, by itself, won't do that.

On a lighter note, is there a particular teacher who made a difference in your life?
Oh, lots. One of the greatest teachers I had was a physical education teacher who taught dancing on the side. I was 5' 11" tall when I was 11 years old, and she taught me to stand up straight and never be embarrassed when somebody came up to my waist and wanted to dance.

For More Information

- *Healing the Hate: A National Hate Crime Prevention Curriculum for Middle Schools.* Free. Call 800/638-8736. On the Web, go to www.ncjrs.org.
- Call the Department of Justice Community Relations Service for conflict resolution and hate crime prevention curriculums for adolescents and teens, 202/305-2935.
- For a K-5 Web site on anti-bias issues, go to the Department of Justice Kids' Page at www.usdoj.gov/kids.page/ after November 3.
- For a copy of NEA's *Safe Schools Manual*, contact NEA Human and Civil Rights, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Single copies free while supplies last.
- For more questions and answers with Reno, go to *NEA Today* Online (www.nea.org/neatoday) and click on "Extra! Extra!"

Debate

Should NEA Affiliates Help Get Rid of Bad Teachers?

Chris Kasson

Yes

Linda Lohr, a 30-year teaching veteran and Association activist in Columbus, Ohio, now works as a consulting teacher in the Peer Review and Assistance Program there. She's working on a manual designed to guide others launching peer review and assistance programs and can be reached at lohr3@aol.com.

Some people say a union's sole purpose is to protect its members from illegal hirings and firings and ensure safe working conditions. They get nervous about the prospect of an experienced teacher being placed in a peer assistance and review program.

After all, they say, how can a union turn on its own members?

My answer: A union's job is not now, nor has it ever been, to protect incompetence. There's no disloyalty in a union looking out for the best interests of the profession as a whole.

A good peer assistance and review program isn't made up of vigilantes collaborating with administrators to endanger the jobs of fellow teachers. A good program enlists the assistance of sympathetic peers to help restore ailing teachers to productive service.

At one time or another, most of us have been troubled by a teacher down the hall whose classroom struggle has become apparent to all who pass by.

For the past 12 years, the Peer Assistance and Review Program in Columbus has been reaching out to that teacher—entry-level or experienced—and offering confidential advice, assistance, and empathy.

Capable teachers assume the role of mentors, visiting classrooms at least 20 times during the school year. Who better to assist colleagues than veteran teachers who've proven their own success?

As a mentor, I can observe classes without the restrictions of someone who's responsible for the day's agenda. I can watch to see if learning takes place. I can focus on specific issues—like questioning techniques, classroom management, or gender equity.

Throughout the year, my ultimate goal is to improve performance. I want the teachers who are assigned to me to succeed. When they fail—which they sometimes do—I feel like I've failed, too.

The worst time in the Peer Assistance and Review Program office comes in the spring when consulting teachers reluctantly acknowledge that someone hasn't shown adequate improvement and isn't going to make it.

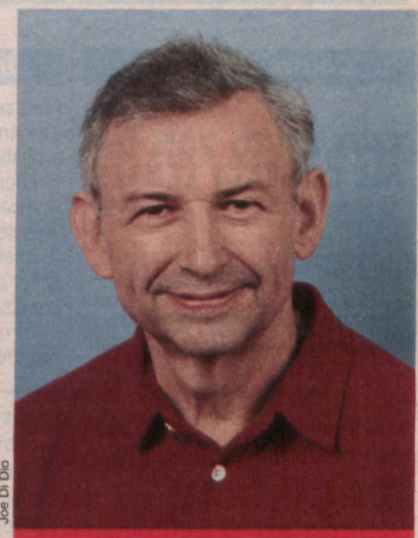
But let's face it: Some people are not cut out to be teachers or to sustain a lifetime career in education. When assistance doesn't help, those people need to be counseled away from teaching or given other alternatives.

In every case, the Columbus Education Association stands ready to offer help and assurance that every member will receive due process.

Nearing the end of my career, I have a vested interest in leaving my profession in capable hands. In recent years, the Ohio state legislature has taken more and more control over teacher assessment. School administrators are under pressure to be business managers rather than instructional leaders and facilitators.

I want to keep the evaluation and retention of good teachers in the hands of practitioners for whom classroom performance is the top priority. And I believe our consulting teachers have the time, expertise, and perspective necessary to do the job right.

In Columbus, we're doing our best to ensure productive classrooms for our students and productive careers for our peers. The end result is the top quality teaching and learning we're all striving for.



Joe Di Dio

No

A 17-year high school history teacher in Mattoon, Illinois, Bill Harshbarger is a member of NEA Today's Local Editor Advisory Board. He edits local and regional newsletters, attends NEA and state affiliate assemblies, and has served on several bargaining teams. He can be reached at Harsh8@aol.com.

Let's not delude ourselves into thinking that "getting rid of" a teacher is a painless experience.

Most released teachers won't start a better career for better pay. Some will voice their frustration and anger. Some will fight for their jobs. Some, we may find, are good teachers after all.

When you hand a colleague his walking papers, you may feel some pain, too. You may get a knot in your stomach, lose sleep, and avoid looking at yourself in the mirror.

Anguish aside, there are many good reasons why teachers should stay out of the judging and firing business. Here are just a few.

■ *It's unnecessary.* Most states have a system to weed out teachers through university preparation programs, certification tests, probationary periods, periodic evaluations, and due process hearings. Every district has a procedure to fire teachers.

In fact, teachers are being fired or forced to resign all the time. Creating a new layer of bureaucracy to duplicate what's already being done is a misuse of valuable teaching resources.

■ *It's a myth—manufactured and sold by NEA's critics—that the Association "saves" bad teachers.* The Association only "saves" the jobs of teachers who are wrongly accused or improperly dismissed.

Critics of tenure protection conveniently ignore the fact that the courts still won't allow vindictive administrators or special interest vigilantes to roam school corridors looking for victims to burn at their particular, twisted, political stakes.

■ *A teacher-driven dismissal system might not be any better than the present dismissal system.* Principals are trained and certified to evaluate. There's no evidence to show that teachers with little evaluation training will do a better job. If they can, then we've wasted tons of money on principal-training programs.

It makes no sense to train teachers as evaluators if they're simply going to do the same thing that principals are already doing. Reformers who argue that the system isn't working should focus on fixing the poor performance of the principals rather than creating new teams of teachers to perpetuate the same mistakes.

Finally, does anyone believe that the teachers who are selected to become judges of their colleagues are going to be any less influenced than principals by bias, pettiness, and political pressures?

■ *It's too easy to misjudge teaching.* Principals justify their jobs in part by claiming they have to make the "hard" decisions. They should also take responsibility for their mistakes. A local affiliate gains little by doing this onerous job for them.

■ *Peer review will divide Association members and decrease membership.* A local affiliate that bargains for the right to fire its own members may have trouble signing them up.

■ *There are better ways for an affiliate to help improve teaching while unifying Association members.* Let's bargain for release time to work and plan together. Let's set up compassionate mentoring programs, reduce class size, and deal effectively with chronically disruptive students. Let's support each other.

But let's be cautious about rushing in where angels—and principals—fear to tread.

What's Your Opinion?

Should NEA affiliates help get rid of bad teachers?

To vote, visit our Web site at **www.nea.org/neatoday** and see the results instantly.

Should kids read *Goosebumps*?

The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today*:
86% Yes **14% No**

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Instructional Aids

Free curriculum. *Science, Society, and America's Nuclear Waste* is available from the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management. This second edition includes a teacher's guide and student readers. Other documents and publications are also available. Call 800/225-6972 or through the Internet at http://www.rw.doe.gov.

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The Education Technology Promotion Guide from the Software Publishers Association offers guidelines for publicizing the success of your educational technology program. A CD-ROM includes letter and press release templates in both MAC and PC formats. To obtain a copy for your local association, E-mail your name, address and the name of your local to Shelstar@aol.com

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Miscellaneous

"GENDER EQUITY NEWS"
For free information and tips on creating an equitable school environment for girls and boys, write: Equitable Schools, NEA Human and Civil Rights, 1201 16th Street, NW, Suite 613, Washington, DC 20036. Also available via NEA's website at www.nea.org

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See the information box in the lower right hand corner of this page for details.

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Making the Grade: A Guide to School Drug Prevention Programs. The NEA Health Information Network is pleased to support this compilation of comprehensive health programs and drug prevention programs. This guide will assist you in selecting the most appropriate curricula for your school. For copies of *Making the Grade*, contact Drug Strategies, 2445 M St., NW, Suite 480, Washington, DC 20037; 202/663-6090. Cost: 1 to 4 copies @ $12.95 each, 5 and over @ $9.95 each.

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Teacher/principal jobs nationwide. Self-addressed stamped envelope to NTC, Box 267, Boston, MA 02117; 617/267-3204.

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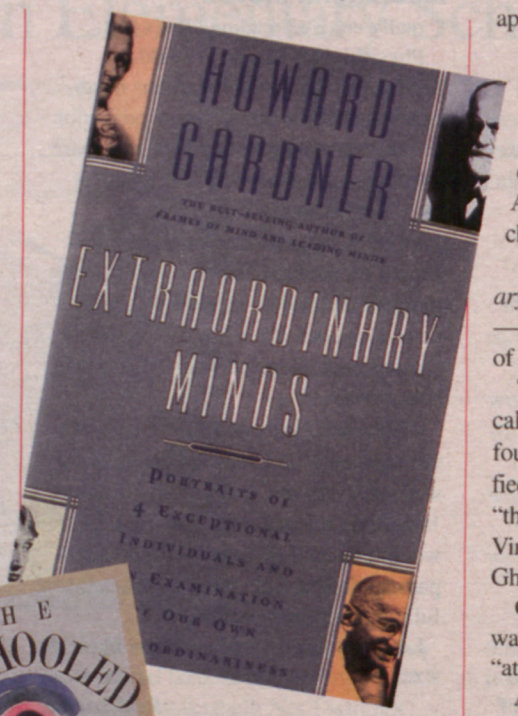
Books

Join Gardner's Search for Clues

How does the mind work? And what can we learn from 'islands of extraordinariness in our midst'?

Extraordinary Minds:
Portraits of Four Extraordinary Individuals and an Examination of Our Own Extraordinariness
Howard Gardner. *Basic Books, 128 pp., $20, 800/242-7737.*

The Unschooled Mind:
How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach
Howard Gardner. *Basic Books, 304 pp., $16, 800/242-7737.*


HOWARD GARDNER
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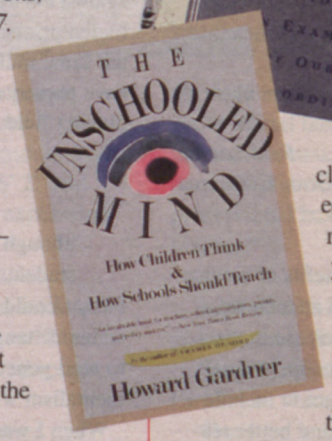

Given the titles of many of Howard Gardner's books—*Frames of Mind, The Unschooled Mind, Leading Minds,* and now *Extraordinary Minds*—you may be tempted to add *Never Mind.*

Don't. By most accounts, Howard Gardner is the most influential living theorist in the education world today.

Best known for developing the theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner's not your average head-in-the-clouds ed-head. He's a foot-in-the-classroom ed-head, one who can make you think about your work—even your life—differently.

In *The Unschooled Mind*, released in 1991, Gardner contrasts the way the mind develops—how kids think and learn—with the way school is organized.

As you might guess, school doesn't come out a winner. But museums and apprenticeships do. They keep kids' interest and "educate for understanding."

That practical knowledge has already changed the way many educators approach their classrooms. After all, why not tailor school to children, instead of children to school?

Gardner's newest work, *Extraordinary Minds*, challenges ordinary readers—that's us—to learn from the "islands of extraordinariness in our midst."

This time, Gardner takes a biographical approach to the mind, looking at four types of extraordinariness exemplified by four great individuals—Mozart "the Master," Freud "the Maker," Virginia Woolf "the Introspector," and Ghandi "the Influencer."

Gardner then explicitly spells out the ways that adults can cultivate children "at promise," not children "at risk."

Adults can expose children to extraordinary models, teach them to reflect and learn from their own experiences, help them to "ignore areas of weakness and leverage strengths," and provide them with the training and opportunity, love and support they need to achieve.

All that may not produce another Mozart or Ghandi. But then again, Gardner reminds us, it may.

The message is once again simple, yet profound: Ponder the possibilities, Gardner tells us. It can't hurt.

—*Stefanie Weiss*

NEA Professional Library Top 10 Bestseller List

1 Pitfalls and Potholes: A Checklist for Avoiding Common Mistakes of Beginning Teachers. Barbara A. Murray and Kenneth T. Murray. ($4.50) The second title in the Checklist Series offers practical advice to new teachers. (#2151-7-10-FB)

2 Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers. Mary Clement. ($4.50) This checklist reveals the secrets of surviving the first year of teaching. (#2153-3-10-FB)

3 Countdown to the First Day of School. Leo M. Schell & Paul Burden. ($4.50) A must-have checklist for every beginning elementary school teacher. (#2150-9-10-FB)

4 The First Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8). Bosch & Kersey. ($14.95) The ultimate first-year teacher's handbook. (#1862-1-10-FB)

5 Moving to the Block: Getting Ready to Teach in Extended Periods of Time. Fleming, Olenn, Schoenstein, and Eineder. ($4.50) The ultimate block scheduling checklist, this compact book answers your questions on how, why, and when you should consider moving from a traditional schedule to a block schedule. (#2159-2-10-FB)

6 Student Portfolios. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Insights from your colleagues on how to use portfolios to assess and enhance student learning. (#2901-1-10-FB)

7 Inspiring Discipline: A Practical Guide for Today's Classrooms. Merrill Harmin. ($10.95) Teachers say, "We want how-to materials on discipline." This book delivers with strategies you can put to use immediately in your classroom. (#2950-X-10-FB)

8 Technology for Diverse Learners. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) When it comes to ESL and at-risk students, these teachers discovered that computers and video technology succeed where other strategies fall short. (#2908-9-10-FB)

9 Creating Interactive Environments in the Secondary School. Lois T. Stover, Gloria A. Neubert, and James C. Lawlor. ($14.95) A practical workbook that shows you how to make your classroom *really* interactive. (#7502-8-00-FB)

10 Inspiring Quality in Your School. Robert A. Sullo. ($14.95) This book shows why *you* are the most important person to inspire quality in your school. (#2951-8-10-FB)

This month's rankings are based on last month's sales for all books published by the NEA Professional Library, a service for all 2.3 million NEA members financed solely by the sale of books and other professional development materials to the education community.

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Books by NEA Members

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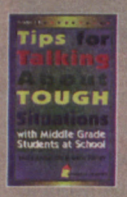
Crystal Landucci and Victoria Tierney. *Composer Comix, 32 pp., $5.95, P.O. Box 827, Bandon OR 97411.* A coloring/comic book on the life of Johann Sebastian Bach. The book was designed for children ages 7-12, but it's suitable for all ages.



Tips for Talking about Tough Situations with Middle Grade Students at School
Stella Alexandre and Gene Finney. *Britehouse Education, 48 pp., $6.95, P.O. Box 496, Whitehouse, NJ 08888, 800/978-5500.* A practical guide to facilitating classroom discussion on 40 issues that middle school students worry about but hesitate to approach. Topics include feeling left out, saying no, boredom, gym class, death, clothes, and more.

Legal Issues in Special Education
Allan G. Osborne, Jr. *Prentice Hall-Allyn and Bacon, 272 pp., $48, 800/947-7700.* A complete text for those responsible for planning, developing, and implementing educational programs for students with disabilities.

Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* for Teachers
Daniel Dyer. *University of Oklahoma Press, 96 pp., $14.95, 800/522-0772, ext. 3199.* A teacher's guide to the famous novel, complete with hundreds of instructional ideas, lesson plans, and worksheets.

Teacher with an Attitude
David Blomstrom. *Geobopological Survey, 324 pp., $15.95 plus $2 s&h, P.O. Box 95465, Seattle, WA 98145, 206/527-1690.* One educator's blistering account of what's wrong with public education. Warning: Blomstrom describes his own book as "raw, insulting, cruel, and profane."

Letters

Class Size

All educators would like to be writing the letter you printed from a teacher in Riverside, California, who was relieved to be teaching 20 first graders instead of 32 (Letters, October).

Smaller class size should be the #1 priority of NEA and all its state affiliates. With smaller classes, we could do so much more.

Let's stop being a major contributor to the Democratic Party and use that money to unite behind a sincere move to smaller classes nationwide.

George Dull
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

'A Noble Thing'

I can't thank you enough for running the article about Jamie Nabozny and the rights of gay students (Rights Watch, October).

I have to deal with these issues on a daily basis at my school site, but people don't usually like to mention the fact that there are gay students all around us, whether we notice them or not. It's too late to notice them after they've already killed themselves.

I'm indebted to you for doing such a noble thing.

David Piergrossi
Chula Vista, California

Whoops!

I tried to order your new humor book based on "In the Light Lane," but the phone number listed (October, This Month) had an extra digit. What's the right number?

Ruth Bushnell
Annapolis, Maryland

Editor's note: To order Plants, Animals and Humid Beans, *call 800/229-4200.*

False Advertising?

I think you should be more careful about whom you sell advertising to.

The Futuro ad (Heads Up, October) offers a "free sample." But when I called the 1-800 number, I was told I could get a free brochure, but that there was a $3 shipping charge for the "free sample." There's no mention in the ad of an extra charge.

In the future, I suggest that you establish a set of rules all advertisers must follow before being allowed to buy space in your—and my—newspaper.

Emory Steinke
Hayward, Wisconsin

Editor's note: Potential advertisers in NEA Today *must meet guidelines that have been in effect for many years. These guidelines are continually revised to address new problems—just like the situation noted here—that may arise.*

What Kind of Union?

I'm concerned about overcrowding in our schools, but I was taken aback when I read about the deplorable overcrowding and teaching loads found in many Florida public schools (Newsmakers, September).

What kind of union representation is there when a teacher is forced to teach 183 eighth graders Spanish in classes of 36 or more? My contract, considered weaker than average for this county, caps secondary class sizes at 31 students and the total teaching load at 140 students for "academic subjects."

If the local union won't stand up for these Florida teachers, who will?

William Degan
Bristol, Connecticut

Editor's note: NEA Today *put William Degan's question to Florida Teaching Profession-NEA Executive Director John Ryor. Says Ryor: "No union of any moral fiber would intentionally allow its members or the students they teach to be abused in this way. Florida is a so-called 'Right-to-Work' state. What kind of union representation is there, you ask? Union representation without the luxury of Connecticut's collective bargaining law."*

Meaningful Moves

I really enjoyed reading "Let's Get Physical, Not Macho" (Health, September). But your expert has misdiagnosed the problem. Physical education teachers have a fantastic knowledge base about the human body. The problem is we never get to teach!

All of those great ideas and activities get put on the back burner while we try to figure out how to manage groups of up to 60 students at a time. (Your picture showed only nine students—what planet is that on?)

If only we could put all the energy we use managing hundreds and hundreds of students every day into actually teaching 150 children a day, then every child would be successful in class and would participate in a wide variety of meaningful movement experiences.

Let's address the real problem: class size.

Reid Larson
Santa Cruz, California

Great Service

You listed several benefits of service learning—improved attendance, improved GPA, and a decrease in discipline problems (Inside Scoop, September). But you forgot to include an even more surprising and better reason for service learning—the decrease in pregnancy rates for girls who volunteer.

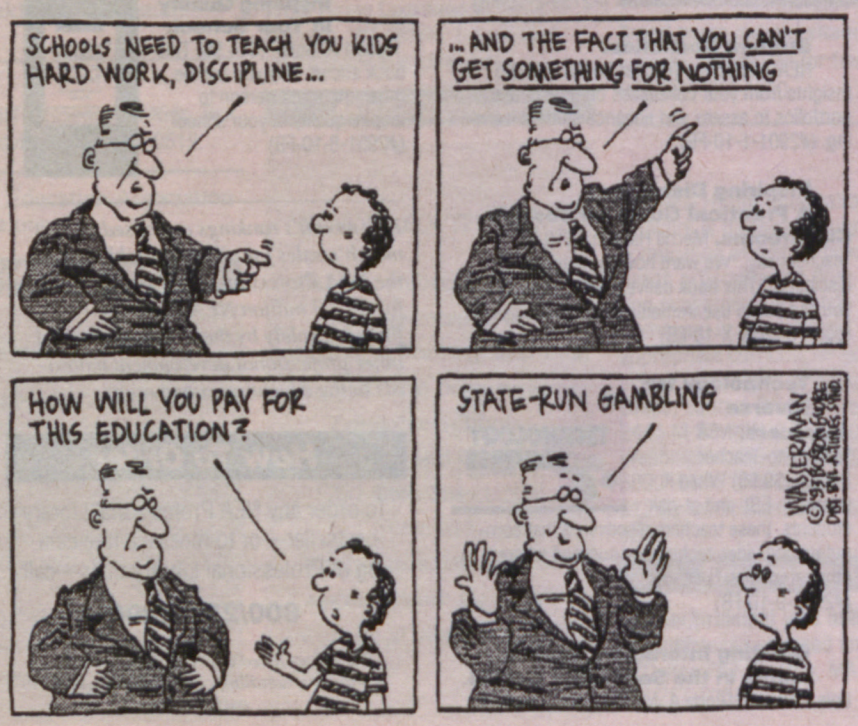
Kathy Megyeri
Sandy Spring, Maryland

No Excuses

I reject Norine Dresser's suggestion that we "respect the differences" in parents who, because their culture may condone it, punish their children for academic underachievement by subjecting them to bruising beatings (Innovators, September).

The popular notion that we should hold in equal esteem the convictions and practices of all cultures is nonsense. Certain beliefs still prevalent in parts of the world—that women are property, that children can be beaten with impunity, that a man should have a price put on his head for writing an objectionable book—can't be excused under the guise of multiculturalism.

John Frank
Kirkland, Washington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...AND THE FACT THAT YOU CAN'T GET SOMETHING FOR NOTHING
HOW WILL YOU PAY FOR THIS EDUCATION?
STATE-RUN GAMBLING
WASSERMAN

The Color Green

I read "Is Environmental Education Scaring Our Kids to Death?" with interest (Debate, September).

It's clear to me that the backlash against environmental education is fueled primarily by polluting industries, the same multi-billion dollar entities that have prevented a level environmental playing field for decades.

Connie Kline
Willoughby Hills, Ohio

Although I find it hard to believe that students who thrive on *Goosebumps* could be frightened by anything someone taught them in school, I tried to read your recent Debate on environmentalism with an open mind.

When I went to the Web site suggested by the debater who took issue with the current state of environmental education, I found an organization clearly committed to getting rid of as many environmental protection agencies and organizations as it can.

I wouldn't look there for unbiased information on environmental policy any more than I would turn to the American Tobacco Institute for information on lung cancer.

Scott House
Arnold, Missouri

Far Afield

Thanks for the brief mention of the growing problem of out-of-field teaching assignments (Bottom Line, September).

In my district, English teachers have been asked to teach science, French teachers asked to teach German, German teachers asked to teach remedial reading, and so forth.

Please consider devoting more space to this critical topic in future issues.

Andrew Smith
Ann Arbor, Michigan

For Art's Sake

Your interview with Jane Alexander (Meet, September) wasn't objective.

As a retired teacher and arts volunteer, I've recently joined those who believe in

A Letter from: Lawrenceville, New Jersey

What Does an Elementary School Teacher Look Like?

New Jersey Newsphotos

In America, when most people think "elementary school teacher," they picture a middle-aged white woman, between 5' 2" and 5' 8" tall, with a serious expression on her face.

I'm not her.

I'm a young, 6' 7", laid-back, African-American male, and I teach art to kids in kindergarten through third grade.

My appearance has caused quite a few double takes—from administrators, parents, colleagues, and students. And it's caused me to think carefully about how to handle first impressions.

Here's what I said to students on my first day as a teacher, just four years ago:

"My name is Mr. Bollar. Therefore, do not call me Bob, Tom, Ricky, Jerry, Lisa, Yo, Tall Guy, Michael Jordan, or any other name because I will not answer you! I am 6' 7" tall. I wear a size 14 shoe. I like all kinds of music. I have been doing art since I was about five years old. I do not know any professional basketball players. Yes, I can dunk a basketball. No, I will not do it for you. And, no, I do not play professional basketball. I am an art teacher!"

A lot of conversations with students go something like this:

"Boy, Mr. Bollar, you're very funny. I wish you were a teacher."

"But I am a teacher."

"You're not like a real teacher."

"Then what am I, make believe?"

"You don't look anything like a teacher. You look cool."

"Then I guess all of the other teachers look hot."

"Are you for real?"

"No, you're imagining me. I'm not really here."

One day, while student-teaching in a nearly all-white school in Pennsylvania, I stopped a student who was drawing a portrait of me.

"What color is my hair?"

"Black."

"Now, what color is my skin?"

"Brown . . . I don't understand. I thought you were called Black."

"I am brown. If I were black, I would be burned, and if you were as white as this paper, you'd be dead."

"Then why are we called black and white?"

"I'm not quite sure, but it doesn't fit well, does it?"

"No. It's stupid."

"If you think about it, nobody is black, and nobody is white. We're all just shades of brown."

That day I felt that I'd taught the best art lesson I could ever teach a student and myself. When coloring in a person of any race, simply pick a shade of brown.

To break the ice my first year, I took a big step and stood on top of one of the three art tables in the room.

The kids' eyes opened wide. I must have looked 20 feet tall to them.

I shouted out, "When I point to you, tell me your full name and your favorite color and food. I'll start. My name is Mr. Bollar. My favorite color is black. And I looooooove steak!"

Then I pointed to the student who was directly under me. She responded with her name, favorite color, and favorite food. The kids were having a great time.

Just as the last student responded and I had jumped down from the table, the students' teacher came to pick them up. They didn't want to go. They wanted to stay with me.

Once they left, I got back up on that table and danced all by myself. What a feeling!

Most parents aren't shy about letting me know that I'm not quite what they expected.

"Wow. You mean it's you?"

"So, you're Mr. Bollar. I didn't expect . . ."

I've even heard, "Do you know where Mr. Bollar is?"

One evening, some parents walked up to me with their heads tilted to the side and their mouths open, like I was a strange exhibit in a museum.

That night I went home wondering if I would ever fit the mold. It wasn't long before I stopped that train of thought in its tracks. There shouldn't be a stereotypical teacher, I realized. It's time to break the mold.

I'm different from everyone else around me, I proud of that, and I'm not going anywhere.

Steven Bollar, a member of the Lawrence Township Education Association, teaches art at Lawrenceville Elementary School. He can be reached at Bollar1@aol.com.

the abolishment of the National Endowment for the Arts.

While I had hoped that Jane Alexander would bring about a change for the better, I've been disappointed. The Endowment still uses taxpayer dollars to finance too much trash.

When the Endowment is gone, "good" art will still be supported by the public and private fundraisers. No one will miss the rest.

Jean Kalmes
Rollingstone, Minnesota

Editor's note: Congress recently voted to extend funding for the National Endowment for the Arts at present levels for another year.

Fire Drill

You report that "four out of five students report having been sexually harassed at school" (Rights Watch, September). I say that's just another example of the alarmist, unverifiable use of fringe-group statistics that I've come to enjoy from *NEA Today*.

By the way, 100 percent of all violent sex offenders report having eaten vegetables within 48 hours of their attack. Sound the alarms!

Robert Bell
Dayton, Ohio

'Do What You Do Best'

Let me remind NEA and the delegates at the annual Representative Assembly that NEA represents me only on union matters (NEA Resolutions, September).

The incessant clamoring for such radical ideas as stripping lawful citizens of the legal right to defend themselves, supporting the claims of illegals, and reducing American sovereignty in international relations is invalid and not supported by your members.

Do what you do best—promote education and our mutual interests. Let the Association socialists form their own political party.

Terry Olsen
Victorville, California

Chasing Bob

I believe Bob Chase's push for "New Unionism" (President's Viewpoint, September) is misguided and a tragic mistake.

In a recent speech, Chase said: "We have butted heads with management over bread-and-butter issues to win better salaries, benefits, and working conditions for school employees. And we have succeeded."

Oh, really? If Chase had not told struggling public employees everywhere that they had reached the promised land, they would never have known it.

George Stone
Mattoon, Illinois

Let's Talk

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	CAR 2			
Comprehensive (Your Car): _____ Deductible	CAR 1			
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